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WILLIAM EDWARD FORSTER.
1851.

LIFE

OF

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

WILLIAM EDWARD FORSTER

BY

T. WEMYSS REID.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

24244
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FOURTH EDITION.

LONDON: CHAPMAN AND HALL, LIMITED.

1888.

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LIFE OF THE

RIGHT HON. W. E. FORSTER.

CHAPTER I.

PARENTAGE AND BIRTH.

"He was a man upon whom there could be no doubt that Nature had laid her hand for the purpose of forming a thoroughly genuine and independent character." It was of Mr. Forster that these words were used in the House of Commons by Mr. Gladstone, on the evening of April 6, 1886; and it is the desire of his biographer to show that they were no less true than generous. Genuine and independent Mr. Forster undoubtedly was, as all who follow the story told in these pages will be constrained to admit. There are special reasons why the progress of his career should be narrated with some detail. No public man of his time suffered more seriously from a misconception of his motives and actions than he did. It was his fortune to find himself exposed to grave suspicions on the part of those with whom his political

sympathies were closest, and more than once it seemed as though fate itself had determined that he should find his most bitter opponents in the ranks of his own friends. His striking and vigorous personality, his characteristics of speech and manner, whilst they undoubtedly served to attract to him in no ordinary degree the attention of the world, and to make his figure a commanding one upon the stage of public life, seemed also to be a source of irritation and anger to not a few, and he was judged harshly in many quarters because of qualities which, one might well have supposed, would have been cherished as virtues. The answer to his critics is to be found, not in any *apologia* offered for him by his friends, but in the plain and unvarnished story of his life as it was lived from day to day, in the seclusion of his own home, and in the full glare of that publicity to which every English politician is compelled to submit. When that story has been told, it will be found to be one that is rich in lessons for all who are capable of learning from a striking and noble example. It is a story which shows how, without great birth, without wealth, and without any special educational advantages, a young Englishman of the middle class, was enabled to rise to one of the foremost positions in the nation, and to enjoy that greatest of all the rewards of a life of labour, the consciousness of having been able in some measure to secure for his fellow-country-

men the realization of the dreams of his ardent youth.

My desire is to tell this story, so far as may be, in Mr. Forster's own words—in the letters which he addressed to his family and friends, in the diaries which he kept from day to day for a great part of his life. These records speak far more clearly and truthfully than any narrative, however artistic could do, of the character of the man himself; and I cannot but believe that in these pages, those of my readers who in days of strong party prejudice may have formed unfavourable opinions regarding the action of Mr. Forster, will find abundant reasons for the reconsideration and reversal of their verdict. They will find, at all events, that what he was in his youth and his early manhood, he remained to the end. Those who knew him intimately in his last days, can recall the enthusiasm which still animated him in his dealings with the great problems of life, the quickness of his sympathy with all who came to tell him of noble ideals, even though these ideals lay far beyond the range of practical politics, the tenacity with which he clung to the belief that a man may, if he strives to do his duty, leave the world somewhat better than he found it. The parable of the talents seemed to be that which had the greatest influence upon him, so far as the practical affairs of life were concerned. To use his powers to the best advantage, to make

them yield the richest return for the benefit of those around him, was a duty which in his eyes was paramount. He had wonderful vitality and energy, and that real love of work without which no man can hope to make an abiding impression upon the world. These qualities sometimes displayed themselves in an aggressive form, which irritated those who did not understand the warmth of his enthusiasm and the strength of his convictions. But those who knew him best, those who either in public or in private affairs were brought into the closest contact with him, never misjudged him upon this point, or mistook for a mere love of self-assertion, his eagerness to play his part in every field of labour in which he felt that he had a duty to perform.

I have spoken of those who judged him, at certain periods of his career, unfavourably; but I cannot forget that if he had to face, from time to time, heavy storms of unpopularity, he had an abundant compensation in the affection which he drew towards himself from the hearts of millions of his fellow-countrymen, who knew him only in his public life, and in the warmth of the love which was felt for him by a circle of friends which embraced almost every class and order in society, and which represented almost every variety of political and religious creed. Next to one great Englishman, who still survives, Mr. Forster seemed to have to the largest degree among politicians

of his time, the element of a strong personality. Some people might be repelled by him; but others loved him. The one feeling that never seemed to exist where he was concerned was neutrality. The secret of this great force of personal magnetism —attracting or repelling, as the case may be— is to be found in those words used by Mr. Gladstone which I have already quoted. It is only the genuine and independent character which by itself, and apart altogether from the position in which it is found, or the work with which it is associated, strikes the imagination of the public. Those who loved Mr. Forster during his lifetime, those who had confidence in him as a man and a statesman, will not, I feel sure, be disappointed with that fuller revelation of his character which will be found in the documents cited in these pages. They will recognize, even in the story of his boyhood, the germ of those great characteristics which aroused their admiration in his manhood, and they will also, I think, find in the circumstances of his early life the key to some of those external features of mind and manner for which they may have been unable to account whilst he was still living; and, foremost among the great influences which made him what he was, must be reckoned his association by birth and training with the Society of Friends.

William Edward Forster was born at Bradpole, Dorsetshire, on the 11th of July, 1818. His

father, William Forster by name, was a man whose remarkable career has gained for him a high place in the annals of the Society of Friends. He was the son of another William Forster, a land agent and surveyor, settled at Tottenham, in the latter half of the last century. Of the origin of the Forster family comparatively little is known. There is, however, reason to believe that at the close of the seventeenth century they were settled at Chester-le-Street, in the county of Durham. There at all events was born, about the year 1690, a Josiah Forster, who took up his abode in London, as teacher of the Friends' School, in Clerkenwell, about the year 1710. This Josiah Forster, of whose character excellent accounts are to be found in the records of the society to which he belonged, does not seem to have led a very prosperous life. He was twice married; his second wife being Jane Birkbeck, of Settle, in Yorkshire. After his second marriage, he joined his brothers-in-law, the Birkbecks, in business, but speedily returned to his profession of teaching, first in Birmingham, and subsequently at Tottenham, where he settled in 1752, and where for more than a century the Forster family were resident.

It would be beside my purpose to follow up the shadowy traces which are left of the early Forsters. A brother of this Josiah Forster went to America, accompanied by his wife, about the year 1720, and a quaint letter written by him to his brother

in England is still preserved. In this letter he says—

"The same day on which I had thy last, I found both Nathan Hands and William Ladd. William Ladd is at Elizabeth Whartenby's, a public Friend, late of Philadelphia, from London. I asked her for him. She directed me upstairs, where I found him in bed in a sort of sleep. My salutation was, 'William, how art thou?' At first he heard my voice, and, surprised, he said, 'Josiah Forster, when camest thou hither?' I replied, 'I am not Josiah; I wish I were with him.' 'Sure thou art?' saith he; 'thou hast his very voice, his countenance, stature, and deportment. I can see no difference, only thou hast thy own hair and he a little brown wig.' 'I am his own brother,' said I, 'and my name is Reuben Forster. I live in this city, and I have a letter from him to-day, in which he desired me to inquire for thee and let him know how thou dost.' 'Alas!' said he, 'I have been three days in a burning fever,' etc., etc., which he thinks is the effect of an old fall from a horse, and has rendered him incapable to endure any hard slavery without prejudice."

There are some other documents in existence bearing upon the characteristics rather than the fortunes of the family. The one fact clearly established is, that so far back as their history can be traced, the Forsters were among the earliest followers of George Fox, furnishing the Society

of Friends with ministers and teachers of both sexes, and taking an active part in the philanthropic labours with which from the days of its founder downwards that body has been honourably associated.

William Forster, the son of the Tottenham land agent and the grandson of Josiah, was the second of a family of eleven children, and was intended by his father to follow his own profession. A very different fate, however, was in store for him; and in spite of many natural disadvantages, he was destined to become one of the most distinguished and successful ministers of the religious body to which he belonged, crowning his remarkable life of apostolic devotion and self-sacrifice with a martyr's death whilst on an anti-slavery mission in the United States of America.

He is described as a man "of a large and somewhat heavy frame, which seemed little fitted for bodily activity; a gait and manner which bespoke one who rather shunned than courted notice; a head and forehead of such capacity as to suggest the idea of considerable mental power; an eye full of quiet intelligence and quick observation; a mouth indicative of gentleness and kindness; and altogether a countenance in which the pleasing and attractive expression of the features amply compensated for any lack of grace and beauty in their form."

Not a few of those who after the death of

William Forster bore public testimony to his labours and his virtues, dwelt upon the fact that he suffered from one distressing hindrance to active exertion. This was a strange mental and physical lethargy which at times enveloped him as it were in the benumbing embrace of a thick cloud, dulling his intellectual faculties, paralyzing his will, and rendering him incapable for the moment of any severe effort of mind or body. Yet, though always bearing about with him this "thorn in the flesh," William Forster was enabled, in spite of his natural infirmity, to accomplish more than most men in the allotted span of human life. Whilst still a youth, and at the time when he was studying the business of land surveying, he came under a sense of deep religious conviction. In the words of one of the testimonies borne to his character by the Society of Friends, he had, in his seventeenth year, "A remarkable visitation of the heavenly love, when he was led to review the years of his past life, and to contemplate with deep feeling the sinfulness of sin, and the holiness of God." It was whilst he was under the influence of "these precious and humbling feelings," that he formed the decision which influenced his whole future life. The Society of Friends depend for their ministrations upon the voluntary labours of men and women who have felt themselves called directly by the voice of God to the work of the ministry. No earthly reward falls to the lot of even the most

successful of the preachers and ministers of the society. One of the fundamental tenets of their body is that all service rendered as unto the Lord must be rendered without hope of any recompense in this world, save that which may come from the humble consciousness of a diligent and faithful performance of an appointed task. It follows that there is little need to guard the ministry of the Society of Friends from the intrusions of hypocrites and self-seekers. The society at all events calls for no qualification on the part of a minister, save the conviction that the Spirit, in whose influence they place so implicit a trust, has called the volunteer to the work to which he aspires.

It was this conviction which filled the heart of William Forster whilst still in his youth, and which led him to abandon all thought of temporal advancement and worldly prosperity, in order that he might render obedience to the voice which he had heard calling him to the service of God and of the oppressed and suffering among his fellow-men, as one of the ministers of the Society of Friends. Afflicted by that curious lethargy which at times weighed alike upon his mental and his physical faculties, and oppressed by a nervous shyness which rendered him altogether incapable of shining in ordinary society, it might have been supposed that William Forster was singularly unfitted for the task to which he had felt himself called. But the spiritual fervour of the man, the

purity, simplicity, and tenderness of his nature, and his childlike trust in the leadings of Providence, enabled him to enter fearlessly upon the walk of the ministry whilst still very young. It was in the summer of 1803, when in the twentieth year of his age, that he first ventured to speak in public at a meeting of the society, and two years later we find his name recorded among the recognized ministers of the Friends.

William Forster's "Life" has been written in two large octavo volumes, devoted to a record of the religious ministrations in which for more than fifty years he was almost constantly engaged, and to his own account of those spiritual meditations in which the simple Quaker preacher attained to heights of holy fervour and to glimpses of the mysteries of the Divine love worthy of St. Augustine himself. But the book is a disappointing one, inasmuch as it leaves out of view the human side of the character of this admirable man. We see his zeal in the work of the ministry, we are called upon to peruse his own outpourings of faith and love; but we get no distinct picture of the man himself, or of his relations with his family and his friends. Happily, enough is known from his own letters, and from the testimony of those around him, to show that whilst devoted to the service of God and of the poor, he had the deepest love for his own kindred, and above all for his son, with whom his relations throughout life were of

a peculiarly frank and tender character. Father and son were bound together indeed by ties of almost brotherly confidence and affection, the beautiful modesty, which was at all times one of William Forster's distinguishing characteristics, leading him in converse with his son to put aside all those airs of superior wisdom and kindly patronage which are usually to be found in the bearing of even the most devoted parents towards their offspring.

It was in 1805 that he began his regular public ministrations. The tall clumsily-formed youth, with the somewhat heavy countenance and the lethargic temperament, did not seem likely to secure command of the unemotional audiences gathered together in the simple meeting-rooms of the society. But it was soon found that, so far as his powers as a preacher were concerned, all outward appearances were deceptive. When, moved by the Spirit, he rose to address a congregation, all his natural shyness and timidity disappeared along with his consciousness of self; he seemed to speak as though under the influence of direct communion with God, and he moved those who heard him to novel transports of pious rapture. "It seemed," says one who knew him well, describing one of his discourses, "as if we might all have been his children gathered around him in his own parlour, his words were so full of persuasive love;" and another records how, when he stood in the "minister's gallery" at the meeting-house, ad-

dressing those before him, "his countenance was almost heavenly," beaming with an inner light that seemed absolutely to transfigure the homely features. His voice was one of peculiar pathos, so that when it was heard giving utterance in the slow and measured tones which are considered appropriate in the preaching of the Word among the Friends, to tender appeals to the consciences of sinners, and fervent praises of the Divine love, it vibrated in the hearts of his hearers, and brought tears to the eyes of old and young. How great was the impression which he made upon those who heard his preaching, may be estimated from the fact that when his son went into business in Bradford, in 1842, he found old people there who delighted to recall the memory of sermons preached by William Forster thirty years before.

The Divine love for man was his favourite theme in preaching. It was to the tenderness and long-suffering of the Father rather than to the wrath of the justly offended Deity, that he sought to draw the attention of those whom he addressed. But he was not one of those preachers whose charity begins and ends in the pulpit or the "minister's gallery." Very early in his career his powers as preacher and teacher were recognized in his own body, and he became popular with the Friends, as popularity goes in that undemonstrative society. But almost from the first his preaching was closely associated with active labours on

behalf of the poor and the oppressed of every race and creed. The good man's interest in the question of slavery began almost in his childhood, and to him belonged the credit of having first inspired Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton with zeal in the cause of abolition. But the Friends as a body were filled with hatred of that system which Wesley had described as "the sum of all villainy," and it was natural, and indeed inevitable, that one of their ministers should be urgent in protesting against it. William Forster, however, found other and more novel methods of showing that he loved his fellow-men even as he loved his God. It was a visit paid by himself and by Stephen Grellet, another eminent minister of the Friends, to Newgate, which led to the introduction of Elizabeth Fry to the scene of her future labours. Prisons and prisoners were, indeed, throughout his life objects of his close attention. Even the "organ grinders" of the streets, who found themselves poverty-stricken exiles in a strange land, had in him a steady friend, and long before the institution known as the Church and Stage Guild had been dreamed of, he had found his way into the society of actors, actresses, and the humbler hangers-on of the theatre, intent upon his Master's business.

Almost from the beginning of his ministry he began to distinguish himself by the number and the success of the "missions" or preaching

journeys which he undertook to different parts of the country. From the paternal home at Tottenham he went forth again and again, on journeys among the Friends throughout England, visiting the sick, comforting the sorrowful, strengthening those who were weak in the faith, exhorting the unpenitent, and confirming the saints. And when on these journeys—which in the beginning of the present century were really serious undertakings—it is recorded that the inertia from which he suffered during his intervals of abstention from work entirely disappeared. He was resolute, clear-sighted, and active, overcoming even the physical indisposition to severe exertion, which was due to his unwieldiness of body. He would travel without resting for days and nights at a stretch, would cheerfully encounter the fatigues and perils of the road, and would devote every spare moment to the prosecution of his work. The fame of his ministrations spread throughout the society, and about the time when our fathers were watching the gathering of the allied forces for the final struggle at Waterloo, there was hardly any part of the three kingdoms in which "the people called Friends" had not enjoyed the opportunity of listening to William Forster, as he set forth to them the unfathomable mysteries of the Divine love, and dwelt upon the fallen state of man.

It is not necessary that I should give any detailed account of the young preacher's journey-

ings. It may be noted, however, that in 1812 he visited Scotland and the Hebrides, and that in 1813 he first saw the country which was afterwards to be the scene of some of his most heroic labours, and with whose history the name of his son must always be associated. From that time forward Ireland always seemed to have a special place in his affections and his prayers. Honourably known and warmly esteemed by the members of the society, he was a welcome guest wherever a Friend dwelt. Though without wealth, his poverty was regarded by the society as in every way honourable, inasmuch as it was voluntarily endured as a sacrifice to the cause to which he had devoted himself. Among the families with which in the course of his ministry he became intimate, were two of special prominence—those of the Gurneys, of Norwich, and the Fowell Buxtons, of Colne. In the first-named family he found a congenial friend, who was as a brother to him throughout his life, in the person of Joseph John Gurney, of Earlham. From the family of the Buxtons he received his chief earthly treasure, the wife whose character was the fitting counterpart and complement of his own.

Whilst the century was only entering on its teens, a religious revival of a striking character had taken place among the Society of Friends. There is some reason for associating this accession of spiritual fervour with the efforts of two men, Stephen Grellet, of whom mention has already

been made, and William Forster. The preaching of the latter had always had a great charm for the young, the tender fervour of his appeals going straight home to the youthful heart, and wherever he went on his mission of love, the result was seen in a great growth of religious enthusiasm among the younger members of the society. Among many young people who at this time were led to take a deep interest in spiritual and philanthropic work, was a little band of both sexes, whose families occupied a higher social position than that commonly held by the members of the society. Among these were Elizabeth Fry, who afterwards gained so honourable a place in the records of English philanthropy; her sister, Priscilla Gurney; and her brothers, Samuel and Joseph John Gurney; Hannah C. Gurney (afterwards Buxton); Maria Barclay (afterwards Fox); and last but not least, Anna Buxton, destined to become the wife of William, and the mother of William Edward Forster.

Even the records of the Quakers have their annals of romance, and the story of Anna Buxton may fairly claim a place among them. Among that little band of ardent disciples of which I have spoken she was peculiarly beloved. Beautiful in face and handsome in figure, she was yet more attractive from the brightness and sweetness of her spirit, the grace and vivacity of her manner. The family of Buxton was settled in Suffolk so far back as the middle of the sixteenth century.

Early in the seventeenth century, William Buxton, the ancestor of Anna, died at Coggeshall, in Essex, and at Earls Colne, in that county, the family was residing towards the close of the last century. Isaac Buxton, Anna's grandfather, had married Sarah Fowell, the heiress of the Fowells of Fowelscombe, in Devonshire, and their son, the first Thomas Fowell Buxton, became in his turn the husband of Anna, daughter of Osgood Hanbury, of Holfield Grange, Essex. Their eldest child was Anna, afterwards the wife of William Forster, their second child being Thomas Fowell Buxton, the well-known philanthropist and member of Parliament, upon whom a baronetcy was conferred in the early years of the Queen's reign.

The family were the possessors both of wealth and station, the first Thomas Fowell Buxton having been High Sheriff of Essex, and a prominent figure in the society of the county. Both he and his wife were remarkable for other characteristics, however. At the time when he served in the office of High Sheriff, his attention was drawn to the miserable state of the prisons of the county, and he visited them all regularly for the purpose of alleviating the miseries of the prisoners, undeterred by the fear of gaol fever, which in those days was rampant in all the prisons of England. Thomas Fowell Buxton was a member of the Church of England. His wife was a Friend. It is recorded of her that she made no attempt to

draw her children into that society to which she herself belonged. "She was more anxious to give them a deep regard for the Holy Scriptures, and a lofty moral standard, than to quicken their zeal about the distinctive differences of religious opinions." Nevertheless, or perhaps one ought to say, as the direct result of this system of non-interference, the whole of her family manifested throughout their lives a warm sympathy with the religious life and philanthropic work of the Friends, and her eldest child, Anna, became, whilst still young, a member of the society, and one of its recognized ministers. Mr. Buxton died at Earls Colne, in 1792. His wife, who subsequently married Mr. Edmund Henning, survived him for many years. It is interesting, in view of the career of her grandson, to read her son's description of her character. "My mother," he says, "was a woman of a very vigorous mind, and possessing many of the generous virtues in a very high degree. She was large-minded about everything; disinterested almost to an excess; careless of difficulty, labour, danger, or expense, in the prosecution of any great object. She had a masculine understanding, great power of mind, real vigour, and was very fearless. With these nobler qualities were united some of the imperfections which belong to that species of ardent and resolute character."

Anna and her young brothers and sister

were brought up by their mother after the early death of their father. Their holidays were often passed at the beautiful home of their grandmother near Weymouth, which was at that time the favourite summer resort of George III. The king and the royal family were frequent visitors at Belfield, the residence of Mrs. Buxton; and it is recorded that the grace and beauty of Anna attracted the kindly admiration of the venerable monarch. "Anna Buxton," says the biographer of William Forster, "was then a fine lovely girl of remarkably refined and elegant manners, and George III., for whom she never ceased to retain a sort of filial reverence and love, noticed her with much kindness and affability; while the unrestrained intercourse allowed her with the royal family, made her familiar with the incidents of their daily life." It must have seemed at that time that there was little chance of any bond of union being established between the graceful young girl, who moved among the rich and fashionable, and who enjoyed to the full the innocent gaieties of the circle to which she belonged, and the young Quaker preacher, who, if he had taken no vow of poverty, was still under orders in a service in which no worldly advancement could be hoped for, and whose whole life was a protest against the frivolities and self-indulgence of the class to which Anna Buxton belonged. Yet between the fashionable young girl and the grave,

shy, nervous, and *un*fashionable Quaker preacher, unknown to either, there were even then some bonds of sympathy. Of both of them it is on record that they had, even in their early years, a singular degree of sensitiveness on the subject of the animal creation. Neither of them could bear to have any part, either directly or indirectly, in the infliction of needless pain upon dumb creatures. To such an extent did Anna Buxton carry this tenderness of feeling, that throughout her life she refused to taste game or to touch any animals killed in sport.

Not only had William Forster and Anna Buxton this strong love for the animal creation in common; they were both very early in life interested in that great anti-slavery movement which absorbed so much of the generous sympathy of the English public sixty or seventy years ago. It has already been stated that to William Forster belonged the honour of having first drawn Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton's attention to the question of slavery; but even before he knew William Forster, whilst he was still a mere child in fact, the eminent philanthropist, to use his own phrase, was "made to think" upon the subject by observing that his sister Anna refused to eat sugar because it was produced by the enforced industry of slaves. If, therefore, William Forster and Anna Buxton seemed at the outset of their lives to be separated widely by circumstances, it is clear that

in their characters and their sympathies there was much in common between them.

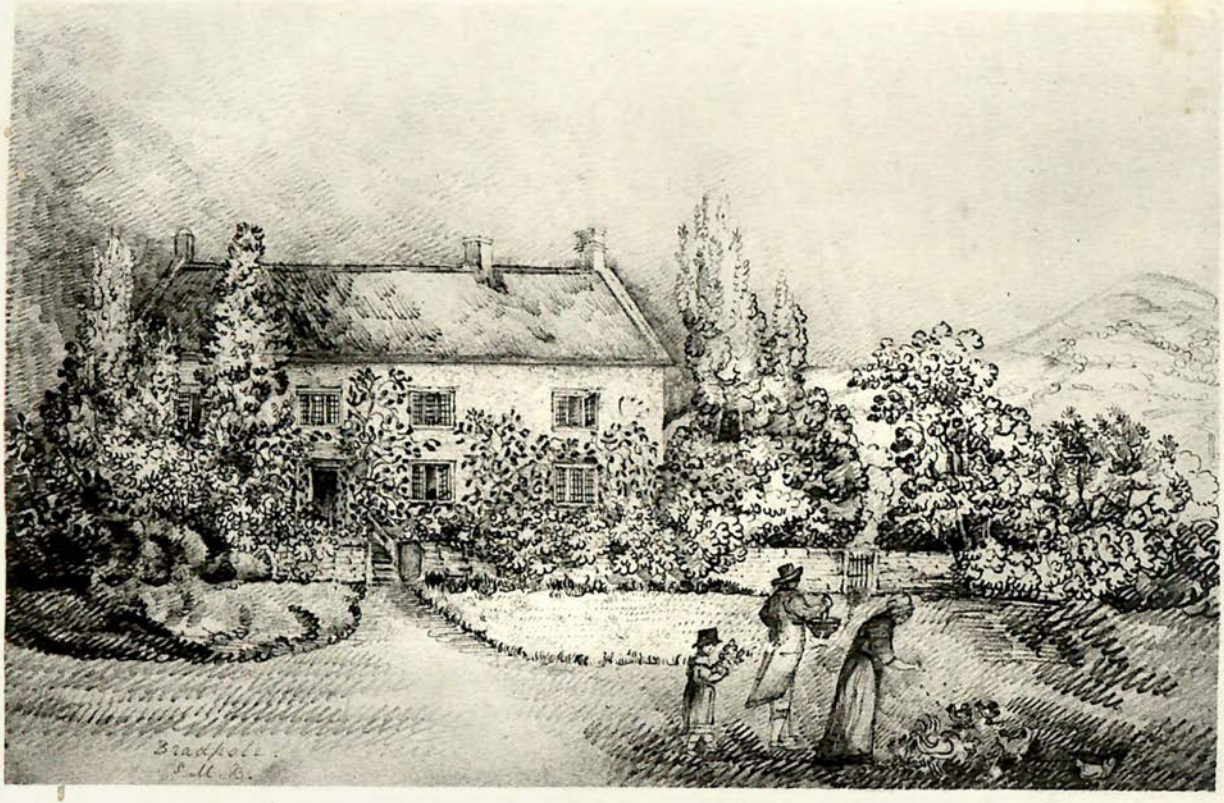
By-and-by came that closer union which was the result of an agreement upon the gravest of all the questions that interest human souls—that of religion. "Continued intercourse with the fashionable world," we are told of Miss Buxton, "soon lost its power to charm; the ball-room and the dance, with the excitement of musical entertainments, yielded only a temporary gratification, and often left a sting of dissatisfaction behind." This was the period in which, in common with several of her young friends, she experienced that deep religious impression of which mention has been made. The death of a young cousin of hers, to whom she was warmly attached, strengthened her determination to abandon the fashionable world, and she sought for and obtained admission to the Society of Friends. Allied through the marriage of her brother with the Gurneys of Earlham, she was now naturally brought into contact with the young minister. He was a frequent visitor to Norwich, and in Joseph John Gurney he had found a congenial soul. Mr. Gurney was a young man of wealth, his family being one of great influence, not merely at Norwich, but in the city of London, where their name was long a tower of strength. He had, however, a higher claim upon the affection of William Forster, for he was a man of great intellectual power and of intense spirituality.

The letters which passed between the two friends down to the moment of their separation by death, were animated by a spirit of something more than brotherly love. The two, it is evident, were knit together in a bond of no ordinary kind, from the moment when they first met, during one of Forster's visits to Norwich on a religious mission. Anna Buxton was not a woman who could play a merely passive part in her new character as a member of the Society of Friends. With characteristic energy she entered into the religious and philanthropic work of the society, and before long she became the active assistant, not only of her kinsman, Joseph John Gurney, but of William Forster, in their benevolent labours. When her intimate friendship with the latter began does not appear. But about the year 1812, we read that Stephen Grellet and William Forster, being engaged on a mission in the London prisons, were appalled by the scenes witnessed on the women's side in Newgate, and resolved to take immediate steps to interest Christian women in the fate of their fallen sisters. They accordingly made application to two ladies who were members of the society, and induced them to enter upon a work the beginning of which marked a new departure in the story of woman's mission in the world. One of these pious women was Elizabeth Fry, and the other was Anna Buxton. From that time forward William Forster and Anna Buxton were closely

united in self-denying labours for the benefit of their fellow-creatures; and it was with the full approval of all their friends that in October, 1816, they were united in marriage. Before that time the bride had, like her husband, been fully recognized as a minister of the society.

The home to which William Forster took his wife was in the little village of Bradpole, Dorsetshire.

Bradpole may be described as an outlying hamlet, connected with the better-known Bridport, a small fishing town upon the coast. The situation is strikingly beautiful. Placed in the midst of the great range of the Dorsetshire downs, it is sheltered by the hills from the rough northern and western winds; whilst looking down the valley on the sides of which the hamlet has been built, a stretch of the sea is visible in the distance. Mr. Thomas Hardy has made the peculiar scenery of Dorsetshire familiar to the readers of his novels. Although characteristically English, it still presents a marked contrast to the scenery of most other English counties. The rich verdure of the treeless downs, which spread in swelling billows far as the eye can reach; the densely wooded valleys upon which the traveller across the grassy upland comes almost unawares; the great orchards, bearing their luxuriant crop of apples, and the streams stealing in secret to the sea at the bottom of some narrow cleft in the moors, the favourite



MR. FORSTER'S BIRTH-PLACE, BRADPOLE, DORSETSHIRE.

home of fern and primrose, make up a striking picture, the special features of which are to be found in few other parts of England.

It was in a detached house of modest appearance, in the outskirts of Bradpole, that William and Anna Forster took up their abode immediately after their marriage. The house, which is really little more than a cottage, still stands unaltered in its main features, save by the substitution of a roof of slate for one of thatch. The high-road runs past the garden gate, whilst the other side of the little plot of ground—half orchard, half flower-garden—is bounded by a rivulet, the musical ripple of which may be heard within the cottage walls. Here the Forsters spent nearly twenty years of their married life, and here their son was born. Writing at the time of his marriage to a friend, William Forster thus described his new home :—

"I must now introduce thee in imagination to our little dwelling. In the first place fancy thyself on the road from Bridport to Beauminster; and about a mile out of town, turn down to the right into a pleasant scattered village, and passing through two or three short lanes, the road neither good nor very bad, thou wilt arrive at our door. Our cottage is a plain-built stone house, thatched roof, and casement windows; one end comes to the footpath alongside the road. In front we have a neat forecourt; at the back a small orchard, and

at the other end I hope to make a good garden. There are two parlours; one of them a neat, snug room, not very large; the other, I think, may be improved and made very habitable. There is a small light room for a store closet, and a comfortable kitchen. There are four lodging-rooms on the second floor—I think of converting one of them into a sitting-room—and we have also good garrets. The only objection is the distance of a mile and a half from meeting."

In this modest home, husband and wife settled down to a life of quiet happiness, the foundation of which was their mutual devotion to the work to which both had felt themselves to be called. Poverty of the sordid kind was not permitted to enter their doors, and yet they were very poor, only being able to make both ends meet by the exercise of a rigid economy and self-denial, faced with equal courage and contentment by both. Both were very fond of flowers—the wife's preference being, however, for the simple wildflowers of the wayside—and very soon the garden attached to their little house began to assume an appearance which bore testimony to the taste of its owners. It was not, however, in the adornment of their cottage home, and in the cultivation of their innocent natural tastes that the newly married couple found their chief delight. "All our dear friends," he writes to Joseph John Gurney, "seem to fancy us very happy in our little

cottage, and rich in the enjoyment of each other's company; and truly they are not mistaken. Our comforts are almost without alloy." He goes on, however, to explain wherein he and his wife found their chief cause for satisfaction. "On our first coming here, I was a little uneasy at being without an object of outward pursuit and attention (though I must say, and thou wilt believe me, that in every possible way to increase the comfort and enjoyment of a dear and most affectionate wife, is a duty and pleasure of all others most satisfying and delightful to me); but I already feel there was not much need of this anxiety. There is enough for us to do. Our poor neighbours are in the extreme of indigence; and there seems scarcely any one to care for their wants, which it will be our privilege and great enjoyment in some degree to alleviate." So William Forster had the happiness of knowing that even in the seclusion of his humble village home, he was in the midst of the work most congenial to his tender and generous soul.

A year of uneventful peace succeeded their marriage. Yet even then there was vaguely forming in his mind the scheme of a task of greater hardship and self-sacrifice than any he had heretofore undertaken. "There has been often," he writes to Elizabeth Fry, "a secret intimation to set my house in order, that I may be ready to obey the summons; but how hard will it be to

leave my dearest companion in life, when I have all that I could wish to find in a wife!"

It was, however, not by the husband, but by the wife, that the first call to active service was heard. In the early part of 1818, Anna Forster "felt it to be her duty to unite with her cousin, Priscilla Gurney, in paying a religious visit to Friends in Ireland." She parted from her husband at Holyhead, whither he had escorted her, and in the company of Priscilla Gurney spent three months in evangelistic work in Ireland. One picture we have of her appearance in Ireland, and it is worthy of being reproduced here. It is from "The Annals of Ballitore," a work familiar to Friends. "Anna, the newly married wife of William Forster, paid a religious visit to the meetings of Friends in Ireland. She joined our society by convincement. Her rank in life was high, and she associated with the great. A few years ago she visited Ireland on a very different occasion—to attend the plays at Kilkenny. Her person and manners are graceful. She is sister to that noteworthy successor of Howard, Thomas Fowell Buxton, and, like him, advocates the cause of the prisoner. Anna Forster's companion was Priscilla Gurney, daughter of John Gurney, of Norwich, and sister to Elizabeth Fry, whose name is dear to humanity, and whose efforts to reform the female prisoners in Newgate have been attended with wonderful success. Priscilla Gurney, though educated in our society, had also

moved in high life, and her uncommon beauty made her most attractive. . . . The dedication of these fine young women, Anna Forster and Priscilla Gurney, who have resigned so much more of the pleasures and honours of this world than most have it in their power to do, affords a striking example; and the sweet serenity which seems to overshadow them, encourages others to follow these humble travellers in the path in which alone peace will be the companion of the way."

Of the result of Anna Forster's work in Ireland we have no actual record, though she herself expresses her grateful acknowledgments of the "many mercies" which she had experienced during her visit. Upon her son the memory of that journey, undertaken in simple faith and love by the mother whom he revered so tenderly, had throughout his life a great and abiding influence. It was the close of May when Mrs. Forster again reached her quiet home at Bradpole, after her Irish journey; and on the 11th of July following, her only child, William Edward Forster, was born.

CHAPTER II.

SCHOOL DAYS.

For some time after the birth of her son the health of Mrs. Forster was very delicate. The boy himself grew and prospered. The father writes in March, 1819, "Our dear boy is become very interesting to us, quite a companion, and very much our delight. I am thankful to say he is healthy, and comes forward much to our satisfaction. How much do I desire that this, the chief of our earthly blessings, may be sanctified to us; that we may be enabled rightly to fulfil every duty towards him, and that we may be favoured to see him walk acceptably before the Lord. Already I feel what it is to have a child born into this world of trouble and temptation. Sometimes, in my too fearful imagination, I anticipate his trials; and all the sympathies of my nature are awakened for him."

It might have been thought that, with a wife to whom he was tenderly devoted suffering seriously in health, and with the parental instinct thus awakening in its full force within his heart,

this was not the time when William Forster would be likely to think of undertaking a great and arduous task, which would carry him to a distant part of the world, and separate him for years from those whom he loved. But, in his entire trust in the Divine wisdom, he never allowed his human affections to interfere with his implicit obedience to that which he believed to be a call of the Spirit. Amid much gloom and doubt and fear, he recognized the fact that it was his duty to go to America on a religious mission to the widely scattered Friends in the States. It was towards the close of 1818 that this conviction first took definite shape in his mind. For nearly a year he waited, in sore conflict of spirit, for the full assurance that he was in the right path. No one could have felt more strongly than he did the pain of the separation from his home and his wife and child, which the carrying out of such a task involved. "Many are my trials of faith and my discouragements," he exclaims as the time draws nigh for setting out upon his errand, "and deep and heavy the conflict of natural affection and feeling. I need not tell thee how hard it is to look towards so long and distant a separation from my beloved and most loving and helpful wife, and our sweet little boy. It is indeed a bitter cup. . . . I wish to serve the Lord with cheerfulness and resignation; but, alas! the flesh is very weak: but may I never forget that, impossible

as it seemed to me, with God all things are possible."

In the summer of 1819 this inner struggle in the good man's soul was ended, by the formal approval of his proposed mission by the yearly meeting of the society in London. It was not, however, until the spring of 1820 that he set out on his long journey, the interval being occupied by a series of farewell meetings with the Friends in different parts of England. His wife and her brother, Thomas Fowell Buxton, clearly recognized the fact that he had been called to his great task by the voice of duty; and, real as were the sufferings of the former in anticipation of the long separation from her husband, she forebore to utter a single word which might deter him from his pious work. "I have here," says Thomas Fowell Buxton, writing from Bradpole shortly before William Forster's departure, "a full opportunity of learning a lesson of humility. It is very well to do good and to serve one's country, while at the same moment we are feeding our ambition and gratifying our pride; but what are the sacrifices I make? I may call them sacrifices, but their true name is—the pleasures I enjoy. Here, however, the pleasures and the sacrifices are totally at variance. How truly and exactly do the words, 'They left all and followed Him,' convey my view of William's two years' absence from a home, a wife, a boy (not to mention the dear horse, and ducks,

and flowers), the very darlings of his heart, all his wishes and desires centering in this spot! Well, I cannot pity him! I am more inclined to envy one who is wise enough to make a bargain so incontestably good."

On the 15th of April, 1820, William Forster embarked at Bristol for America, and it was not until June, 1825, that he was again permitted to stand on English soil. Very pathetic is the account of the parting scene, when his wife, his parents, his brothers, his friend, Joseph John Gurney, his fellow-labourer, Stephen Grellet, and others bade him farewell on the deck of the vessel. "It was a memorable occasion," writes Joseph John Gurney; "both William and his wife were marvellously upheld." The latter, indeed, was enabled so far to rise above the sense of her own anguish, that in prayer in the cabin of the vessel, where some twenty friends were assembled, she "returned thanks for the prospect which was given her of William's safe voyage." There was "a look of joy and peace" on the husband's face as his friends on shore last saw him standing on the deck, whilst the beautiful ship slowly glided down the river. In the hearts of husband and wife there was the comforting sense of the Divine presence, the feeling that all sacrifices could be endured which were met in pursuit of the plain path of duty.

"My depths have been at times very deep," writes the wife in her first letter to her husband

after the parting. "I have felt indeed; but I must reverently acknowledge that I have been greatly, unexpectedly supported and comforted again and again; and that in a way so sweet to my feelings. Sometimes I have felt such a cheerful calm, I could not doubt where it came from, and then such a lively sense at times that my dearest was only gone for a time, that he is coming back to me. . . . But though this has predominated above expectation, I have indeed had to drink a bitter cup. A very suffering path has this separation been to me, and must I not expect will often be. . . . Our darling boy is finely and truly lovely, so very affectionate in his manner, in such a sweet disposition this last day or two. He puts his hand out when I ask where dear papa is, and says 'Gone,' and when I asked if he loved thee, has answered me 'Yes.' . . . When we reached here, about half-past nine at night, I felt a tiny cheering support. Thou seemed almost at my side, my love. I have had confirmation on confirmation in this way (though at times so much affected, and may I not say, afflicted), that this is my right place. This will be to thy comfort, I know."

So far we may be permitted to intrude upon the sufferings of Anna Forster during this period of separation from her husband. Her natural courage and simple piety sustained her during the whole period of trial. She occupied herself not only with her child and her home, but with that

work in the ministry to which she also was dedicated. Once, indeed, her heart almost failed her. It was in 1823, when she received unexpected intimation of the fact that her husband's absence was to be prolonged for two years beyond the period originally fixed. "Truly it has been as a heavy storm upon me," she says (January 9th, 1823); "but, my dearest, from this time write just as thou thinks to me in it, for I trust I can now bear it, and surely we love to have only one object as much as possible. I think I have strength to encourage thee not to fear, my dearest, but to attend to all the leadings of thy gracious Lord. . . . Let me ask thee, and thou need not be afraid, I believe, of telling me, whether thou continues to have a prospect to the West Indies. The Lord will keep thee in safety through all, if so, I do believe. . . . I greatly feel for thee in going into Carolina on account of the slave trade, etc. I had hoped such suffering might be spared. . . . On third day morning, sweet Willy said, before it was quite light, 'What did thee cry for so last night? Will thee cry any more? Are thee crying now?' And he has seemed really to feel thy not coming home. Sometimes lately, before thy last letter came, he used to say, almost pettishly, 'I want papa to come home so.' Well, when I was dressing him on third day morning, I told him when dressed he should go down and warm himself. 'No, I shan't go down. I shan't

leave thee when thee are so sorry.' . . . Dear child! he is very engaging, and I believe does really love thee."

William Forster, in the mean time, was pursuing, amid many hardships and some dangers, the work he had undertaken in the United States. The American Friends had recognized the noble qualities of the man, and though he had come amongst them as a stranger, they had quickly learned to love him. He travelled many thousands of miles through the Northern and Southern States, and spent some time both in Upper and Lower Canada. When in the South, his strong feeling on the subject of slavery was quickened by his observation of the hateful system on the spot; and even then, despite the gentleness and timidity of his character, he did not scruple to lift up his voice in open protest against the crime of which an entire race were the victims. The extract I have just given from one of his wife's letters, shows how resolutely he could resist the temptation to return to the home he had left with so much pain and difficulty, so long as he conceived that duty constrained him to labour in that distant field. But no mistake could be greater than that of attributing to William Forster any lack of tenderness towards wife and child. The pious father believed that he was called upon to forsake both, in order to follow the Master whom he served; but day by day his thoughts were fixed upon his English

home, and every letter which he wrote bore testimony to the tender yearning of his heart towards those whom it sheltered. Amid all the hardships and difficulties of his five years' journeying, there were certain treasures to which he clung persistently. Among these was the first letter ever written by his son, a child's simple note, which the father carefully preserved until the day of his death.

It was of this period of his childhood that Mr. Forster often, in after life, told with amusement a characteristic anecdote. He was travelling in a coach in the charge of his nurse, when a benevolent old gentleman began to talk to him. "Where is your papa, my dear?" said his fellow-passenger. "Papa is preaching in America," was the reply. "And where is your mamma?" continued the gentleman. "Mamma is preaching in Ireland," was the answer which the astonished stranger received.

In June, 1825, the long strain upon the hearts of husband and wife came to an end. The former landed on the 14th of that month, at Liverpool where he found his wife awaiting him. They proceeded to his mother's house at Tottenham, where his "darling boy" was at that time staying, and after a brief sojourn there, the reunited family went down to Bradpole, to begin again that domestic life which the husband's call to America had so long interrupted. The boy now became the

inseparable companion of his father. Tenderly as he loved his mother, William Edward Forster entertained an affection not less warm and tender for his father. An only child, born when his parents have passed their first youth, and brought up in the closest companionship with them, stands in a dangerous position. It may be that the son of William and Anna Foster did not pass completely unscathed through the ordeal of childhood; but if that be the case, the only traces of the fact which now exist are to be found in the old-fashioned gravity of his letters, and in the pronounced opinions which, whilst still a boy, he had formed upon many subjects on which boys seldom trouble themselves to think at all.

It must have been a sober and somewhat monotonous life which he led during those earliest years at Bradpole. The simplicity of the Quaker style of living was at all times characteristic of the ways of the little household, and no one can be surprised that a certain quaint formalism of manner and speech distinguished the boy, or that he learned to discuss grave social and political questions with his father and mother before he had learned to play with children of his own age. His mother's bright and vivacious temperament furnished a striking contrast to the serious disposition of his father, who was prone to take desponding views of life, and whose profound and unaffected sense of his own unworthiness must have had a

somewhat depressing influence upon those who were nearest to him, and who knew and loved him best. It must not be supposed, however, that the boy's life was without its natural pleasures, or that his parents were unable to sympathize with him in the ordinary pursuits of childhood. Their love of nature and of the animal creation was shared to the full by him, and in the garden and the beautiful country around Bradpole, he found inexhaustible sources of innocent amusement.

William Edward Forster learned to love the scenery of his native county with a passionate attachment, which only grew stronger with the passage of time. Throughout his life he was animated by a profound love for the grand and the beautiful in nature, and when the time came for him to fix the home of his manhood, the spot which he chose was one of the most picturesque in the most beautiful of all the valleys in Yorkshire. But even the beauties of Wharfedale, with its silvery stream, its grand moors, and its noble trees, never seemed to dim the strength of his affection for the "happy vale" of Bradpole, and the familiar outlines of Barrow's Hill, beneath the shadow of which his childhood was passed. To the last his eye would kindle, and his voice grow warm and deep, when Bradpole and the neighbouring downs and valleys were named in his presence.

His grandmother, the wife of Mr. Fowell

Buxton, was now settled at Weymouth, with her second husband, Mr. Henning, and a letter of hers, written about the year 1825, is the earliest I can find addressed to the boy. As a quaint example of the moral discipline under which he was placed thus early, it is worth printing.

"Weymouth, Third Day.

"My very dear Willy,

"The very pretty books called 'Frank,' I have sent upon conditions as follows:—

"1st. Thou art to try to read this letter before the books are untied.

"2nd. Whenever thou art so far forgetful of thy duty as to let thy dear mother call thee or order thee more than once to do anything, thou art to tie up the books for one week for each offence, and beg Maria to write such offence or offences on the outside of the cover of the books, and the day of the month when they are tied up and when they are untied.

"3rd. Whenever thou art so forgetful of thy duty as to let Maria call thee or order thee more than once to do anything, thou art to tie up the books for three days for each offence, and beg Maria to write thy offence or offences on the outside cover of the books, and the day of the month when they are tied up and when they are untied.

"4th. If I receive the covers of the books after thy having them three months, without any writing

on the outside, I intend to allow thee to choose another book . . . . I remain, thy very

"Affectionate grandmother,

"A. HENNING."

The Maria referred to in this letter was a nurse to whom the child was devotedly attached. Under his mother he commenced his education whilst still very young, and it was not until 1828, when in his tenth year, that he began to receive regular lessons from Mr. Taylor, the perpetual curate of Bradpole, with whom he continued to read for two years. Among his earliest letters, all carefully preserved by those who saw in him with better reason than any founded on mere parental partiality, the promise of future distinction, is one written to his father during a visit which the boy paid to his grandmother Forster's house at Tottenham, in October, 1829.

"On third day I went to quarterly meeting, which I very much enjoyed. I saw Aunt Elizabeth Fry, who spoke very beautifully in the first meeting, but I could not speak to her, the women's meeting being so much shorter than the men's. Elizabeth Dudley, and two or three other women Friends spoke likewise. The second meeting was chiefly occupied with an appeal made by Thomas Sturge against Gracechurch Street meeting. . . . I saw Richard Philips in the meeting. He inquired particularly after both thee and mamma,

and he said he loved you both, and for your sakes he would kiss me; and so he did kiss me in the meeting."

Delicate health to some extent interfered with the boy's studies, and occasioned anxiety to his parents and friends; but if at times he was unable to continue his lessons under Thomas Taylor, he was able to follow his own favourite pursuits, which were happily consistent with the development of body as well as mind. From a little diary which he kept with tolerable regularity in 1830 and 1831, we get an accurate picture of his occupations. Already he had fallen under the spell of that love of Nature which was so strong in him to the end. It is not often that boys of twelve are susceptible to the influence of fine scenery, but even at that age Forster was moved by the grandeur of the sea, and by the softer beauties of the hills and vales of Dorsetshire. Nor was his passion for Nature confined to his admiration of fine scenery. He had learned to note the habits of bird and beast, and the favourite lurking-places of flowers. All through the boy's diaries are references to the first appearance of cuckoo or swallow, of wood sorrel or anemone. His parents had provided him with his one great luxury—a pony, whose duty it also was to carry his mother on her visits to Bridport for shopping purposes—and he rode much about the beautiful district

around his home, gaining strength of body whilst he was filling his mind with those pictures of Dorsetshire scenery which he cherished with an undying affection to the latest hour of his life.

It must not be supposed, however, that the artless record of his life from his twelfth to his fourteenth year, which has been preserved for us, shows him only as a boy intent upon these innocent amusements. He was no infant prodigy; but even in those early days the true bent of his mind was clearly indicated. We find him recording the books which he has read—Constable's "History of Mary Queen of Scots," Bourrienne's "Life of Napoleon," the *North American Review* on "the Greek Revolution," and so forth—and putting down in his diary his own opinions on the subjects, and on the manner in which those subjects have been treated by the authors. Nor is it only with serious reading of this kind that his mind is engaged. He studies the newspapers regularly, and before he has completed his thirteenth year stands revealed to us as a budding politician, deeply interested in the battles of reform, and disposed to criticise the political achievements of the Duke of Wellington with the unfriendly impartiality of an *Edinburgh Reviewer*.

Juvenile productions such as this little diary, written in a sprawling boyish hand in a couple of thin memorandum books, can seldom be laid before strangers with edification; but one or two

passages may be reproduced, because they show that even then some of these mental and moral characteristics which were most prominent in later life had made their appearance. What, for example, can be more characteristic than this account of a man who had excited his admiration by his public actions, written when he was twelve years of age:

"September 8, 1830.—We went to monthly meetings at Shaftesbury. We dined and slept at Sarah Mullet's, but I drank tea at John Rutter's, whom I like very much. There has lately been an election at Shaftesbury, in which he has been very much engaged. He is, I think, a complete picture of an independent, public-spirited man. Frank, noble, generous, and talented, he has by his abilities and exertions been the chief and almost successful means of spiriting up the people to a resistance of the immense influence of Lord ——, whose agents have, by their harsh and tyrannical mode of procedure, strongly and deservedly excited the people against them. John Rutter has been blamed for rendering them more excited. But was he to be blamed for telling the truth and nothing but the truth; for exposing the practises of men who—as one instance out of many—have ordered every one of their tenants who have voted against them to be turned out of their houses in at least three months? Was he to be blamed because the lowest of the mob, who

care not on whose side they are, have happened to commit excesses on his? Was he to be blamed because that by a few of the true words he had said he had further excited the people? No; John Rutter has done nothing but what every true-born Englishman ought to admire and applaud."

Very juvenile, no doubt, this outburst in honour of the village Hampden of Shaftesbury, but striking, too, as showing that in the case of Mr. Forster also, the child was father of the man.

In November of this year, 1830, we find the boy discussing the political crisis and the change of government with the keen zest of a member of Brooks's Club. "The Duke of Wellington," he remarks, "has effected two great measures, the Test and Corporation Act, and Catholic Emancipation, for which we must thank him. But as I do not think it likely he would have followed up the liberal course he had undertaken, and because I not only prefer Whiggism in the abstract to Toryism, and as it is to be hoped that the Whigs now in power will fulfil their three great promises, viz. the abolition of slavery, retrenchment, and moderate reform, I must confess that I am glad of the change."

It would be easy to multiply these extracts from the diary. There is one passage in particular in which "the condition of England question" is discussed with remarkable spirit and boldness,

and with an uncompromising sympathy with the poor, even though, under the pressure of their sufferings, they have been led to indulge in rick-burning and other forms of violence, which I am tempted to quote; but I have given enough to show that even then the boy took a strong interest in public affairs, and that in the society of the father and mother, whose idolized companion he was, he had learned to discuss the questions of the day with an eager interest and intelligence which were distinctly beyond his years. Some of his friends already, indeed, saw in him the promise of future distinction in the political world. In the diary of his kinswoman, Anna Gurney, of North-repps Cottage, I find, under date of May, 1830, the following passage :—

"We have had a visit of much interest from our brother and sister, William and Anna Forster. Young William is a promising fellow. Truly may we rejoice in him. He is a boy of an aspiring nature, not unlike Harry. We asked him what he meant to be. 'A lawyer. My father has given me a choice of two professions—medicine and law —but I shall take to the law, because in that line I may get into Parliament.' To distinguish himself in Parliament is his present clear end and ambition, and his Uncle Buxton a model and pattern. We do heartily wish him to resemble his father and uncle on both sides. In our own case the promise of the future generation may well cheer us."

The lady from whose journal this extract is made was destined in after-life to exercise not a slight influence over Mr. Forster's character and career. She was a somewhat distant relation of the Buxtons, and she lived with Miss Sarah Buxton —Mrs. Forster's sister—at Northrepps Cottage, not far from Northrepps Hall, the seat of Thomas Fowell Buxton. In the "Life of Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton," we are told how the cottage stood in a deep secluded dell, opening on the fishing village of Overstrand and the German Ocean. "The path to it from the hall lies through the woods, and thither Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton always turned his steps when his spirits needed to be enlivened, or his anxieties shared; well knowing that his presence would ever be hailed with eager delight." In later years it was William Edward Forster who turned to "the cottage ladies," as they were familiarly called, for counsel and encouragement, and who invariably received from them the help he sought. They were indeed a remarkable couple, and it is to be regretted that no special effort has been made to preserve the story of their lives from oblivion. Sarah Buxton was an invalid, but she took the keenest interest in all the philanthropic works of her distinguished brother, and herself carried on many missions of mercy among the people around her. Anna Gurney, her "partner," as they invariably termed each other, was a woman of great intellectual

power, highly educated, and endowed with a resolution and strength of will which enabled her to face every difficulty with cheerful courage. Though a cripple, she was able even in those days, when railway trains were unknown, and continental inns were a terror even to hardy men, to travel far and wide through Europe, everywhere studying with care and keen insight the social and political problems which presented themselves among the different peoples whom she was visiting. When living at home, in the secluded cottage at Northrepps, her lameness was no obstacle to an almost incessant activity, and to her personal superintendence of the domestic affairs of the humble fisher-folk who lived around her. She was the "Lady Bountiful" of Northrepps and its neighbourhood, aiding her neighbours not merely by her personal charity but by the sound sense which was always at the service of those who sought her advice. There was something masculine in her temperament; but it was allied with so genuine a goodness of heart, that no one ever felt her to be in the slightest degree unwomanly.

Among the many objects which enlisted her sympathy was the saving of life at sea. Wrecks were frequent on the exposed coast of Norfolk, and Anna Gurney was in the habit of directing the operations of the fishermen when they were engaged in rescuing the unfortunate crews of shipwrecked vessels. A graphic account is still extant

in one of her letters of how news was brought to her one Christmas morning whilst she was attending service in church that a ship was off the coast in distress, and how at once she marched forth at the head of the whole congregation, and superintended the work of rescue, returning to church after having witnessed the landing of the imperilled crew, just in time to hear the benediction pronounced, and to announce the good news to the clergyman and clerk, who had been left to continue the service alone.

Her mind was richly stored with knowledge. She knew many languages—not only Latin and Greek and the modern languages which form the ordinary equipment of an educated woman—but Norsk and other northern tongues seldom acquired in those days by any save professed students. Like many other persons of active temperament who accomplish a great deal of practical work, she was able in the midst of her busy life of usefulness to continue her course of study. She was a great and omnivorous reader, a regular and voluminous correspondent. Not without a certain literary faculty, she edited for a number of years a little magazine called the *Fisherman's Friend*, in which frequently verses of her own composition appeared. Above all she was the *confidante* and friend of both young and old in the families with which she was allied, and she and her gentle and warm-hearted "partner" might almost be regarded as the central

figures in the family group. "The Cottage," at all events, was a point towards which young and old were never tired of turning their steps. I have spoken at this length of the ladies of the Cottage, because both of them, but more especially Miss Gurney, had a distinct influence upon Mr. Forster's career during its most critical period.

At the time of that visit to the Cottage the record of which is preserved in Anna Gurney's diary, William Edward Forster had not even commenced his career as a schoolboy. He was under the not very regular tuition of Mr. Taylor, whose efforts to inform his mind were supplemented by occasional lessons in French from a French teacher who had taken up his abode at Bridport. In August, 1831, however, the home life came to an end. He was sent to school at Fishponds House, Bristol, an establishment conducted by one Joel Lean, a member of the Society of Friends. He remained there until the autumn of the following year. Mr. Lean's school was probably neither better nor worse than most private schools of that era. If the worthy Friend who conducted it erred at all, it was on the side of omniscience. He undertook not merely to give his pupils the "rudiments" of a polite education, but instruction in every known branch of literature and the sciences; and in less than six months from the young pupil's entrance upon his studies, his parents had been called upon to disburse the handsome sum of

£14 8*s*. 2*d*. for the books with which he started upon his scholastic course. He had to work hard; the school hours, with brief intervals for meals, being from 6.30 a.m. to 6 p.m. It does not appear that he really learned much during the sixteen months he spent at Fishponds House; but his school life did him good in many respects. It acted as a wholesome corrective of his comparatively lonely life at Bradpole, and in the company of boys of his own age, the only child began for the first time to feel his own way in the world. Happily, too, Fishponds House was surrounded by large grounds, in which he was enabled to indulge his love for flowers and birds. His letters to his parents, though thoroughly boyish, are written with unusual care and fulness for a young schoolboy, and with entire frankness about his school life and its occasional scrapes. Some specimens will show both the course of his life and the ardent affection with which he clung to his home and those in it.

"Bristol, 15th day, 8th mo., 1831.

"My very, very dear Mother,

"I should have written thee before, only I really have not had time, else I longed very much to do it. I like school quite as well as might be expected, and expect to like it more and more every day. The master seems to be a much more agreeable person than I thought he would be, and the mistress is very kind indeed."

"My very, very dear Papa and Mamma,

"I cannot say how much I am obliged to you for your letters. I had been rather low yesterday morning, being afraid I should not have a letter, but as soon as I had them they set me all to rights, they were so very kind. I like to have them on first day, because then I can read them over and over again, and almost learn them by heart without any interruption. I could read every word of mamma's letter it was written so plain, so she need not be at all afraid of writing me very long ones. . . . I am in the first class in Greek with Edward Aikin and Alfred Hartland. I hope I shall be able to keep in it, but I am afraid I shall find it very difficult. I have not yet begun German, because my other lessons are not quite settled, when they are I suppose I shall form a class with Gurney Fry in that and in Virgil.

"I remain your *very*, *very* affectionate son,

"W. E. Forster."

"Fishponds House, 29th day, 8th mo., 1831.

"I am sure I do not know what I should be able to do without your letters; I could keep every word of them, they are such a pleasure to me. I wish you would say how you are in every letter, for if you don't say I shall be always afraid there is something the matter. I have got a very good garden, which I mean to take great care of."

"Fishponds House, 19th, 9th mo., 1831.

". . . I have done with Lucian and I am now doing Plutarch's 'Apothegms.' I am to begin the 'Analecta Majora' as soon as I can get the book. I am half sorry, half glad, to hear that you are not going to have a contest; if I was at home I should certainly wish for one, but as I am not perhaps you may as well remain quiet."

The following letter shows a tenderness and power of sympathy which were certainly remarkable in a boy of thirteen.

"MY VERY, VERY DEAR FATHER,

"Thy letter has been a very great comfort to me. . . . The text, which I have found in the fifth verse of the fourth chapter of 2 Corinthians, I thought the first part was particularly applicable to thee when thou art so low about thy own preaching; when I am sure there is no reason for it. Pray, my dear father, do consider, that if thy preaching has been of no other use (which I am sure it has been to many other people), it has been of very great use to me, and has tended more to my good than that of any other person that I have ever heard. I hope this will be some comfort to thee, and may encourage thee to think that thou art nearly of as much use to others as to me."

One of the great events of his stay at Fishponds

was a walk to Tintern Abbey and back, which he took with the master and a number of his school-fellows. It was a walk of about *thirty* miles, and he tells his parents with pride that he was the youngest but one of the party, and that, though very tired and stiff, "I held out quite as well as I expected, and some of the strongest fellows in the school were more knocked up than I was."

In after days he used to recall with amusement his pride in this achievement, and how he was "set up in his mind" because it put him on a level with the boys who had despised his want of strength and skill in games.

Another incident which diversified the ordinary routine of school life was a religious movement among some of the boys in the school, which he describes with youthful simplicity and sincerity, and which evidently made a deep impression upon him. At this time one of his heroes was his father's friend and fellow-minister, Stephen Grellet, of whose goodness he speaks with enthusiasm.

"19th day, 3rd mo., 1832.

"Stephen Grellet was at meeting at Frenchay yesterday morning. What a good sweet man he is. I should so like to have been at home when he came to have waited upon him. He gave us a very good sermon, indeed, chiefly upon the text of 'Halt not between two opinions,' on

which he spoke of the necessity of making a good choice, and that we should not be wavering. I thought that in the latter part of his sermon, he addressed himself to us; but soon after he had sat down he rose up again, and spoke to us in particular, in a very sweet and striking manner. But he spoke as if he knew everything about us. At one time he said that our parents had no greater delight than in our being good, or words to that effect. After meeting he spoke to every one of the boys. He knew me, and said he saw both father and mother in me. The Tucketts were so kind as to have me, and Lucas, and Fry, to dinner with him. What warm shakes of the hands he gives one."

In October, 1832, he was transferred from Mr. Lean's school to an establishment of a higher class, also associated with the Society of Friends, kept by Mr. Binns, at Grove House, Tottenham, and here the remainder of his school days were spent. At Tottenham he was close to his father's old home, and was thus constantly in communication with his uncles and other members of the Forster family. The Fowell Buxtons too had a house in London, and he had many opportunities of being with his uncle, at that time member for Weymouth, and his family. He was taken up to London by his father, when he went to school, and they spent a few days before his school duties commenced in

sight-seeing. Writing to him after his own return to Bradpole, his father says:

"I so thoroughly enjoyed thee in our walks about London, and thou wast so entirely to my heart's content, so loving and tender of me, it was a true help to me at parting from thee. I had a very wakeful night, and a time of most stormy agitation it was to me. But still I felt confidence in thee. Thy good moral and religious principle, thy high sense of honour, and thy strong affection towards us, gave me real comfort."

At Grove House he made good progress in his studies. Though he neglected no part of his work, and indeed excited at times the alarm of his friends by his excessive application, which led him often to rise at four o'clock in the morning for the purpose of beginning his studies, his chief delight was in mathematics. There still exists a theme of his "On the Study of Mathematics," in which "the noblest of all human sciences, the grandest structure ever raised by mental art," was praised with so much warmth, that the fears of his master were excited on his behalf, and he was warned by that worthy man, that "all human knowledge, even that of 'the grandest and noblest structure ever raised by mental art,' was but dross in comparison with the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus and Him crucified." The warning was expressed in terms so emphatic as to call forth a respectful rejoinder from Forster, then

only in his fifteenth year. In the course of this reply he remarks:

"The study of mathematics is one of those pleasures without which, in our present state of imperfection, we should find existence disagreeable, if not miserable. Its abstract tendency is not evil; in fact, to a mind convinced of the truths of revelation, it furnishes the final proofs, and the most convincing exemplifications of God's wisdom and power. Then why is it said that a pursuit after it causes us to disregard that wisdom in comparison with which, noble as it is, it must be deemed foolishness? I deny that it has that effect. It is a bad state of mind, totally independent of the study, not the study itself, which does the harm. A person to whom the truths of revelation are irksome, will gladly fly to any occupation by which his thoughts may be diverted from the irksome subject. The occupation may or may not be blamable. It equally answers his purpose, to accomplish which he makes use of means which, though not bad in themselves, yet by the use he makes of them, he forces them to serve a bad purpose. . . . I believe it is the disposition in which we are when we study, not what we study, which injures or benefits our minds, and that the study of mathematics, when rightly conducted and considered, must benefit us, because it is not only one of the most ennobling, but one of the most useful of human sciences."

There might have been some excuse for the fears excited in the heart of good Mr. Binns, by his pupil's enthusiastic devotion to the study of mathematics, if it had been accompanied by a selfish indifference to subjects of a less personal character. This, however, was far from being the case. In the year 1833, the whole country was absorbed in the great anti-slavery battle, in which Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton played so prominent a part, and William Edward Forster displayed more than a schoolboy's interest in the progress of the struggle. There is a letter from his father in April, telling him of the collection of signatures for the petitions in favour of abolition at Bridport and Bradpole. The Society of Friends was in the van of the movement; but it affected all classes of the community. "Almost everybody," says Mr. Forster, in the letter referred to, "seemed ready to give their names with their whole hearts. Many who could not write seemed as if they thought the blood of all the negroes would be upon them if they did not make their mark. I took an inkstand with me, and thou would have been amused to have seen the men signing out of doors, on a horsing block, or the top of a wall. One poor fellow came up from his work; but his eyes were dim, and to leave him without excuse, I made him take my spectacles. I often think how much I should have valued thy help. Thou wouldst have managed the whole thing so capitally

for me. I hope, dear, thou enjoys this charming spring. I am sorry to say that, though I think every spring more lovely than the last, yet my heart and mind have been so engrossed by the abominations and wickedness of slavery, I have hardly been able to take any enjoyment at all. As a proof of it, I have seen but one bird's nest."

"I must tell you," writes Forster to his parents, April 5th, 1833, "of my great jaunt last third day. John Henry had seen Uncle Buxton and Edward last first day, and he came home saying that he was invited to go to Devonshire Street to the Anti-Slavery meeting. Now this put me into a great ferment; but I was determined I would get there by some means or other. So I sent a note to Chenda" (his cousin, daughter of Sir T. F. Buxton), "inviting myself, and telling her to get a note sent that evening. I was in a great fright, for I did not get the letter till just after breakfast on third day morning, when I got a very kind note from Cousin Priscilla with a ticket. I got leave to go. The meeting began at twelve; at least, then the chair was taken. Lord Suffield occupied it. Uncle Buxton moved the first resolution, and J. J. Gurney seconded. Lord Morpeth spoke, and made a very good speech. Earl Fitzwilliam, Lord Milton, and the Reverends J. Cunningham and Barnard, Dr. Lushington, and G. Stevens all spoke. I went to dinner at Devonshire Street."

It was about this time that in a letter to him from his mother, we get a glimpse of the simple and wholly unworldly character of his father. "Did dear Uncle Buxton," writes Mrs. Forster, "seem encouraged about the slaves? Thy father begins to cast forward how the Antis are to teach the slaves when free, and to my discomfiture suggested the other day somewhat upon my going to keep a school of little blacks. Only think of the misery I should be in! I only hope I should not wish them all in slavery again, that I might be free from such bonds. Poor dear man! How he has felt about them; and it is joyous to know a day of deliverance is near."

It was only natural, of course, that the son of William Forster and the nephew of Thomas Fowell Buxton should take an interest in the question of slavery; but it may fairly be inferred, from the eagerness with which he discusses the question in his letter to his relatives, and from the anxiety he showed throughout respecting the issue of the struggle, that Forster was led quite as much by his own sympathies as by the influence of his nearest friends, to espouse the cause of the negro. In the mean time he continued his studies with marked success. The passion for mathematics was the chief feature of his school life; nor did it pass away when he left school. All through his life he was intensely fond of solving arithmetical and mathematical puzzles, and often found recreation

in this form of mental labour, when in the midst of his political work.

The impression which he made upon those around him during this period seems to have been uniformly favourable. One of his surviving school-fellows, Mr. Henry Birkbeck, has a vivid recollection of his energy both in his games and his studies. "In the latter," Mr. Birkbeck writes, "he soon took a very leading position, and in all school matters was the advocate of every general improvement; in fact, I have often said I have had great reason all my life to be thankful for the high sense of honour he inculcated, which was previously, I fear, wanting in many of us." Another of his old school-fellows recalls the fact that he was a great favourite with the mathematical master, Mr. Richard Abbott, who pushed him forward at the expense not only of less promising pupils, but of his own health. His industry, his talents, his strong sense of honour, and his youthful enthusiasm on behalf of the great political movements which were then agitating the minds of the public, combined with his healthy love of boyish sports, and the zest with which he entered into all questions of school polity, seem to have made him a general favourite both with masters and fellow-pupils. Though devoted to the acquisition of knowledge, there was nothing about him of the prig, and though unusually sensitive and open to all gentle and kindly influences, he

was never a milksop. He was, as his letters and journals abundantly prove, very impulsive. Above all, he was quick to denounce anything that he regarded as mean or unjust, his whole soul revolting against self-seeking and injustice. In his impetuosity at times, in those days, he used stronger language than the occasion seemed to demand, hitting hard at the wrong which had excited his indignation, and not sparing the wrong-doer. In the letters of his father he is warned against this failing of his, and occasionally we find his teachers also correcting it. But the whole picture of the youth during these days at school is that of an eminently healthy and noble soul—generous, sensitive, bright and sympathetic, absolutely free from the small meannesses which are at times to be found in the dispositions even of school boys.

A letter from a connection of his mother's, addressed to her in 1833, gives us a pleasing picture of Forster: "I think it will please thee to hear of thy two Williams, who left us to-day for Northrepps, after a most acceptable visit. . . . I have been most pleasantly reminded of thee by thy sweet interesting boy, who was so like thee that I was on the point of calling him 'Anna' yesterday, and so was D——, who met them here the other day. I do not know where I have seen a boy that I liked so well as dear William, or thought near so pleasing and attrac-

tive. He strikes me as much improved since I last was with him—more subdued, less forward in his manner, indeed his manners now are just what one could wish. I have enjoyed his company, and should much like to have him more with us. He has all the effect of cultivation and refinement which one seldom meets with in an equal degree. In short, he strikes me as far superior to any boy of his age I know, except ——, who I am partial enough to think his equal, though possessing rather different qualifications. It is very interesting to me to see the two *uncommon* fathers and sons together. I could not but look on them this morning, as they all four sat together at reading with unusual pleasure and interest." Yet a little later (1834) his cousin, Priscilla Buxton, writing to his mother to report one of the school-boy's visits to his uncle's house in Devonshire Street, says: "He" (T. F. Buxton) "*forbade* his getting up at four for the present, and we only wonder that you had ever allowed it. . . . I must say I was *charmed* with him as a companion. His intellect and powers of conversation were much beyond my expectation, and my *only* anxiety about him would be lest he should overwork himself." Still more trustworthy pictures of the boy during his days at the Tottenham school may, however, be obtained from extracts from the correspondence between himself and his father.

Letter from his Father.

"May 3rd, 1834.

"I hope thou takes enjoyment in this brilliant weather, and that now and then thou dost indulge thy young eyes with a sight of the green fields. We are looking most gay and blooming at Bradpole. The rockwork is in all its glory, and our anemones and ranunculuses are truly superb. I think we never had such fine beds of flowers before. They are quite the admiration and amazement of the village. How I wish thou could see them, and more than all that we could see thee, sweet fellow! We do so very dearly love thee and delight in thee. Uncle Fowell wrote us of his having seen thee. I fancy he gave thee a little lecture on immoderately early rising for mathematics. It is most kind of him to interest himself so about thee. I hope thou feels it to be so. Thou really must take his advice and stay in bed till a reasonable hour, or I am afraid it will be ruinous to thy health. . . . As you are such a set of deep politicians, I should like to know what thou thinks of the ministers' new measures."

To his Father.

"Tottenham, 8th mo., 31st day, 1834.

"I am reading Jonathan Dymond's book, which I like very well. I have read the first

volume of Sir James Mackintosh's 'History of England.' I like it very well. Whilst master was getting me the other two volumes, I have read Crowe's 'History of France.' It gives me a very good idea of the progress of French manners and institutions, although I think the author appears to be an expediency man. But that, perhaps, is by no means an extraordinary discovery. I have drawn up a set of regulations for the use of my play-time, by which either in my play-time, or by getting up in the morning, or by reading in bed, I obtain in every week, not including the evenings, five and a half hours mathematics, and eleven and a half hours reading; and I have set myself in my leisure time in the evening, two evenings for themes, two for mathematics, one for Latin verses, and one for Greek Testament and sundries."

To his Parents.

"Tottenham, 31st, 10th mo., 1834.

"How most truly kind it is of you to let me stop at school another half. How few parents there are who would do so. However, I think your kindness will, and indeed has had the effect of spurring me on rather than making me idle. . . . Now I have got one most particular thing to speak about. I understand from my aunts that you are going to cut down the dear old handsome, venerable wych elm. How can you think of such a piece of iniquity? Pray let it only be thoughts,

and let those thoughts be washed down by the waters of oblivion; never to return. Now there are all manner of arguments to be urged against it.

"First of justice. What crime hath the poor wych committed, that it should thus unreasonably be felled? I am sure he has done all he could to ornament the premises.

"Secondly of gratitude. After he has caused the premises to be admired so many times, surely he ought not to be cut off from those premises.

"Thirdly of expediency. As he remains, he is the most beautiful tree we have; but if we cut him down there will be nothing but an old, ugly, hateful stump. Talk about shutting out the light! We don't want to have our eyes dazzled out in the parlour. The room will be deluged by flies if we cut it down.

"Most likely, however, the crime is already perpetrated, and I shall, alas! have no more sweet climbing in its branches."

The Christmas holiday of this year (1834) was spent, not at Bradpole with his parents, but at the Cottage at Northrepps. It was a delightful time which the boy thoroughly enjoyed. A large family party had assembled at the Hall; the Cottage too was full of guests, and the only son had an opportunity of spending Christmas surrounded by all the pleasant and exhilarating influences of youthful society. His studies were not, however,

neglected during the vacation, for he read Greek with Miss Gurney regularly during his stay. It was in the spring following this visit to Northrepps that he began to be seriously exercised regarding his future occupation. The youth was eager to begin the battle of life on his own account, though he was at the same time absolutely submissive to the judgment of his father. It may be doubted, indeed, whether any son ever yielded a more unquestioning obedience to his parents than that which he displayed, not only whilst at school, but even after he had reached the years of manhood. The reader has seen how much of tenderness and gentleness there was in the elder Forster's character. He has seen also, however, with what unflinching resolution he could nerve himself for the discharge of any task to which he felt himself called by duty. Mingled with the deep and true affection he had for his child something of this resolution is to be found. He decided his son's movements in the light of his own ideas of what was right and seemly, and with—for a man of his gentle temperament—what seems to be a strange lack of regard for the feelings of the son himself. But the latter never rebelled against his father's will, and never failed to submit in silence to his decisions when once they had been formed.

Thus, when the inevitable discussion began regarding the future business or profession of the son, and when, as was equally inevitable, some

slight differences of opinion began to show themselves, the boy acted invariably in such a manner as to prove that the reverential regard he professed for his father was really felt, and that he was at all times ready to sacrifice his own inclinations to meet the wishes of the latter. His own strong desire still was to go to the bar, for he saw in the profession of the law the most direct—indeed, as it then appeared to him, the only—road to political life and the House of Commons. Eager to push on, we find him at one moment chafing under what he regarded as the listlessness of Mr. Binns, his schoolmaster, and at the next pouring all manner of suggestions concerning possible ways of getting a standing at the bar into his father's ears. The latter steadily discouraged the son's aspirations; and like many another father, pointed out to the ardent youth the many difficulties which attended the path of the young barrister, the fewness of the prizes of the profession, and the long period of waiting which must be endured in almost every case, before even a modest competency can be secured. It is in reply to one of his father's letters upon this subject, demonstrating to him the slender prospect of means as a barrister, that Forster writes:—

"I have not yet had time to think sufficiently on what thou sayest with regard to my prospects; but it staggers me a good deal. If it is quite certain that I could not get a name at the bar till

forty, there is most certainly an end of all thoughts about it—a most complete knock-down."

Perhaps it was even a more complete knock-down than the father imagined. Like many men who have themselves voluntarily embraced a life of poverty and self-denial, for the benefit of others, he was anxious that his son's lot should be different from his own, and he seems to have come to the conclusion that all thoughts of a profession must be set aside, and that the boy must be devoted to a business life. For a time, indeed, the hope was entertained that a place might be found in a solicitor's office for him; then came the prospect of a clerkship in Gurney's bank, whereat the fond father was greatly delighted as offering a provision for life for his son; but gradually the field of choice seemed to narrow itself, and it became evident that it was to a commercial life that he must devote his great talents and his immense energy. At the close of 1835 he left the school at Tottenham, with his future still undecided. Many inquiries had been set on foot regarding businesses in different parts of the country; but no satisfactory opening had presented itself. He had learned all, however, that he could be taught at Tottenham, and pending a decision as to his future course, he joined his friend and school-fellow John Henry Gurney at Norwich, and with him read under a private tutor in that city, the Rev. Richard Kidd, rector of St. Swithin's. Before we leave

Tottenham school altogether, however, some mention must be made of the school themes which he wrote. Their titles are curiously suggestive of his work in after life. One is, "On the conduct of England to Uncivilized Nations;" and it sets forth in strong language our misbehaviour towards some of our dependencies. Others are on "The Advantages to Civilization from Education," "The Causes of the Misery with which Ireland has been and is now afflicted" (furnishing a vigorous indictment of English rule in Ireland), "The Lawfulness of Rebelling against an Unjust Law," and "Tithes." There is much that is vigorous and picturesque in these youthful efforts, and there are signs also of the strength of conviction and outspoken denunciation of wrong-doing which so eminently distinguished Mr. Forster in later life. Indeed, upon his essay on "Tithes" is the written caution of his master, "Beware of acrimony, William, lest whilst inveighing against an unchristian system, thou shouldst be influenced by an unchristian spirit." Writing to his father in reference to this rebuke, he says with characteristic frankness, "I had a *bene* put to my first paper on tithes; but I have got a 'preach' written at the end of the second for acrimony and unchristian spirit."

It was during his last year at school that he wrote the following letter, describing a visit to the House of Commons:—

"Tottenham, 4th mo., 3rd day, 1835.

"My very, very dear Parents,

"I must take advantage of my frank at once, and write to you. Gibson and I went up to town yesterday to get a pair of globes. . . . I then went to Uncle Buxton's, intending to dine there, but found they had just done, and Edward was going to the House. They told me there was just no chance of my getting in. However, I thought I would try, and Uncle Buxton recommended me so to do; so I took a cab and went off with all speed. After divers adventures and being turned into the passage, Edward sent out Cousin Andrew to me, who most luckily found me, and kindly took me in and placed me by Edward in the body of the House. There was no speech of great interest till Uncle Buxton's. Goulburn was speaking before, and they got thoroughly tired of him, and were laughing and talking without any consideration; but upon my uncle's rising they became very attentive, and listened to him most gratifyingly. Of his speech the papers will inform you better than I can.

"It showed how great was his weight in the House by the eagerness of each party to claim him for their own particular views, by cheering what he had said. He was firm against the Radicals, and for moral and religious rather than general education; said that Protestantism had suffered greatly by being the persecuting religion, and by

being loaded with a wealthy and lazy clergy (vehement cheering from the Opposition), that Catholicism had had an adventitious advantage by being the persecuted party. But that now in the south of Ireland the great majority of Roman Catholics had gained power, as to render their religion triumphant rather than persecuted, and the effects of this triumph were to produce a set of clergy as pious and devoted as ever the world beheld (loud cheering from the ministry). His amendment you will see was well received by the Opposition.

"The next members, particularly Borthwick, were not at all allowed to be heard, and I had the scene of laughing down in perfection. Dan was the next mighty man. No part of his speech, I thought, displayed more talent than the artful manner in which he took advantage of his honourable friend, the member for Weymouth's speech, to turn it to his views.

"I did not see Dan in all his glory; he was witty and clever, but afraid of being too strong for his Whig friends. Sir Robert's was indeed a noble speech; oh, so clever. I would not have missed it for anything. He seemed mortified at the part Uncle Buxton had taken; tried hard to gain him; said he was sure the honourable member for Weymouth himself would not be content if the motion succeeded. In fact he directed towards him the body of his speech. Uncle Buxton said this morning at breakfast, 'Peel looked straight at me for

half an hour, trying to catch a sign of my face, till at last he turned away in despair from such a block of a face to somebody else.'

"Edward and I left when the House divided at twenty-five minutes to three. We got to bed about half-past three. Uncle Buxton did not get home till five.

"I do not think I ever enjoyed a day, or rather night, so much. I did not get to Tottenham till after dinner-time at the school. I thought I had better come to my grandmother's and dine there, and write this letter, as franks do not wait.

"Pray write to me soon.

"My grandmother says they want a letter as they have not heard for some time.

"With very dear love, I remain,

"Your most affectionate son,

"W. E. FORSTER.

"The majority was thirty-three against ministers."

CHAPTER III.

BEGINNING LIFE.

FORSTER was now in his eighteenth year; his school days were finished, and pending the choice of a business, he was, as we have seen, occupying himself in studying under Mr. Kidd, at Norwich, in the company of his old friend and school-fellow, John Henry Gurney. At Norwich—or rather at Earlham, where he was residing—he found himself in the midst of congenial company. Mr. Joseph John Gurney was his father's dearest friend; his son was his own school-fellow and intimate companion. Within a short distance were Northrepps Hall, the residence of his uncle, and Northrepps Cottage, the home of "the cottage ladies." He ought to have been very happy at this time in the society of so many who were not only dear to him, but who on their side took the warmest interest in his welfare. As a matter of fact, however, this was one of the most anxious and trying seasons of his life—one upon which he ever after looked back with pain. The truth was that he was full of the unrest of

youth, eager to begin his work in the world, burning with a desire to turn that remarkable energy of mind and body which distinguished him to some good account, but unable to advance because of the doubts and fears, and the leaden-weighted lethargy which oppressed his father.

Mr. Forster, senior, could not make up his mind as to his son's future. He had shown resolution enough in putting his veto upon the idea of the bar, but what was to take the place of the bar he could not determine. It was not that there were not openings of a favourable kind of which advantage might have been taken, but that the worthy man saw dangers for the son whom he cherished so tenderly attending every possible course. His great object was to shield him from all harmful influences, to keep him from worldly companions, and above all to guard him against any associations of an irreligous kind. Forster was wonderfully patient during this period of doubt and uncertainty as to his future, though the strain upon his ardent nature was a very heavy one. Sometimes, indeed, he ventured to reason with his father on the subject of his fears; but he never betrayed any other feeling save that of the deepest respect for his judgment, and he bravely strove to curb his own impatience at the delay in his entrance upon business life. At last, through the agency of Mr. Joseph Gurney, an opening was found for him which seemed suitable to everybody.

It was in the manufactory of a Mr. Robberds, at Norwich. The chief business of Mr. Robberds was the weaving of hand-loom camlets, of a kind now quite unknown, but in those days largely exported to China.

To his Mother.

"Earlham, 19th, 4th mo., 1836.

". . . Well, now for my first day of business. Thy son is now a man of business and extremely puffed up. I went this morning at ten. Robberds soon gave me some bills of parcels to enter and examine and letters to copy. His old father was there all the morning. He is, as I suppose thou knowest, very blind. He comes in to talk, poor man, as he can do nothing else. He is a very nice old man, remarkably civil to me, and he gives me such quantities of *sirrings*—that is, he says *sir* so often—that my intense humility does not know what to do with himself. However I found his talking not at all suiting with my sums, the novelty of which required my unsophisticated attention. Robberds kindly took me to a yarn factory and showed me all about it, because thou seest, my dear mother, I am to overlook the education of the dear child Camlet from the back of a Norfolk sheep till it gets to the back of myself, barring the tailoring; for I mean to have a camlet coat with all due velocity. I am to warp some thrums myself, and intend to weave thee a parti-

coloured cloak of scarlet, yellow, and blue. I came back at five most ferociously hungry, seeing that I had eaten nothing whatever. Robberds told me that he never thought of luncheon. However, I gave him to understand that I intended to think of it for half or at least a quarter of an hour every day. I do hope that I feel grateful to Joseph Gurney and my other most kind friends; and I am sure I need, for what a great comfort it is to be on the way to stand on one's own legs."

The letter speaks for itself of the energy with which, when once he had received his parents' assent, he threw himself into the business-life which thus opened before him. He went through all the departments of the trade he was learning. In a small upstairs room at the manufactory he had a hand-loom of his own, and there he learned the art of weaving under the tuition of one Samuel Poll, foreman to Mr. Robberds. In due time he was able to gratify the desire of his heart, by producing a piece of camlet for his own wear, and another piece which he presented to his kind friend Mr. Joseph John Gurney, by whom it was converted into a cape for out-of-door use. By-and-by, in accordance with an understanding arrived at when Forster went into Mr. Robberds's establishment, his father and mother gave up their pleasant home at Bradpole, and removed to Earlham Road, Norwich, in order that their son might once more live under their roof.

Before his parents removed to Norwich, he paid frequent visits to Bradpole to see them, his warm heart always turning gladly to the place he loved so much and to those who were so dear to him. Writing to his friend Barclay Fox,* who had purposed to join him on one of these visits, he gives a characteristic account of his early home.

"Tottenham, 6th, 1st mo., 1836.

"My dear Barclay,

"I have got a few minutes to spare before we go off to London, which we do about a quarter after seven, and I think I had better employ them in writing to thee, not for thy good,

* Mr. Barclay Fox was a member of a family distinguished in the history of the Society of Friends, and known in English literature through the publication of the "Journal of Caroline Fox." The home of the Foxes was at Falmouth, and there Forster in his younger days was a frequent visitor. Barclay Fox became one of his dearest and most intimate friends. He was a young man of high character and great ability. Mrs. Charles Fox was another member of the family with whom Forster was on terms of the warmest friendship. There was a distant connection between himself and the Fox family through the Birkbecks of Settle, and in acknowledgment of this relationship Forster always addressed Mrs. Charles Fox as "Aunt Charles." She was a woman of great intellectual power, and possessed a remarkable grace and charm both of mind and manner. Through the years of his early manhood Forster was to her a much-loved younger friend. She had a very high estimate of his powers, and understood the depths both of force and tenderness in his character better than most did. His friendship both with Mrs. Charles Fox and Barclay Fox was only severed by death.

however, but for my own entirely. I do not think I gave thee, to come to the point at once, a sufficiently low view of our capabilities of entertaining thee.

"My parents are as poor as rats—which is a very great plague, but I hope to make some money before long—and consequently we live in quite a small way, for example, keeping neither carriage, nor gig, nor horses, only a small pony on which my mother generally rides to meetings, and our house is quite a cottage. Nothing is further from my wish than in any the slightest degree to discourage thy coming. There is nothing I should enjoy so much, and both my father and mother will like it extremely, nor do I think so lowly of my friend as to suppose that he would take such things into account in his friendship; but still I thought it would be best that thou shouldst have a clear idea of things, as I should be sorry to be so selfish as to take thee away from other visits which I fear would have more in them to give thee pleasure. But still I know of nothing that would delight me so much as thy paying me a visit, and I think we might or rather will have some fun together, though I have my doubts as to the begging excursion. . . . Most fellows would think me a great fool to write such a letter, but I do not think thou wilt.

"Give my dear love and devotion to the girls, but they are great plagues, for they have unfitted

me for all that is sober and good for some time to come.

"Unless thou writes by six days' post from London to the contrary *we shall expect thee* to be at Bridport on seventh day night, and I shall order a bed for thee. The coach is the Herald, which goes through to Exeter, and books at the Saracen's Head, Snow Hill, or Swan with Two Necks, Lad Lane. I again repeat, *Do, do come if thou canst;* but I shall not be hurt any way, nor do I wish thee to give up anything thou wouldst enjoy more.

"Thy very affectionate friend,

"W. E. FORSTER."

His life at Norwich was rendered both pleasant and profitable by the numerous friendships which he formed there, most of these, as was natural, being due to his connection with the Buxtons. A few extracts from his journal for 1836 will show the character of the men whom he met at the houses of his relatives, and the qualities which he admired most in those around him:—

"*8th mo., 1st and 2nd day.*— . . . John and Julia Venning and Dr. and Caroline Ashe came to dinner. A most interesting evening. I never met with a man of the sort whom I admired so much at first sight as John Venning. He is a right down splendid man, full of originality and warm-hearted Christian benevolence, and a noble courage in doing good—a sort of defiance, a snap-my-hands

at any one who might stand in my way. . . . He told us some capital stories in a most animated and original manner. I wanted so much to see more of him, that I asked Dr. Ashe to ask me to breakfast next morning, which he did very kindly."

"*2nd day.*—Breakfasted at the Ashes. John Venning was most interesting—spoke most pleasantly of Uncle Charles. He wanted to take me to Peafield, a place of villainy in Norwich, a district, and to introduce me to some one who would tell me of all the wicked people in the place, that I might visit them. I let him know that I thought I must have some little consistency myself before I could undertake such a thing. One would be glad to content one's self with moral and political philanthropy; but that does not show a right state of mind, though till one does get a right state of mind I suppose one had better leave such matters alone. Anyhow he was most kind, wished me to spend a week with him some time this month, and said he would show me his Russia journals."

Fully to understand the meaning of references like these to his own lack of "a right state of mind," we must bear in mind the exalted standard of spiritual excellence which his father constantly sought to hold before his eyes. Here, for example, are the birthday wishes which he received from William Forster in this year:—

"Bradpole, July 11th, 1836.

"My dearest William,

". . . We think much of thee, and talk thee over and over again almost every time we sit down together. . . . I hope thou dost not forget thy birthday. I am sure I do not. What a crowd of thoughts rush in upon my mind when I think that thou hast nearly entered upon thy nineteenth year! There is much that gladdens and comforts my old heart; and most earnestly do I desire to give thanks for so great a blessing to Him to whom I know all thanksgiving and praise is due, that thou hast been brought thus far on thy way without more faults; that thou hast not more often stumbled, and hast been kept from falling into that which might have brought sorrow and shame upon those most near and dear to thee, and to whom thou art inexpressibly precious.

"Whilst I write, how very much do I desire that our gracious Saviour and Lord, He who delights in the peace, the purity of heart, and the upright, consistent, and circumspect walking of His believing followers, may be with thee in all the dangers and trials of the coming year (and a most important year we may expect it will be to thee in many respects), in all the joys of thy buoyant spirit, and in all thy moments of care and anxious thought—and I know they are not few—to help thee to resist temptation, and to bless thee and

give thee peace; so that if, in the good Providence of God, thou art brought to another anniversary of this day, it may be with the assurance of a good conscience—that best of all treasures.

"Make that prayer thy own (Psalm cxix. 117): 'Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.' It is a prayer that God will hear and answer, too. Do, my precious child, act up to the full extent of all thy resolutions. As to all matter of bad conversation at the warehouse, allow me to press it upon thee with all the warmth of affection, and the utmost earnestness of which I am capable, that thou wilt 'have no fellowship with any of the unfruitful works of darkness,' neither in word nor deed, but rather reprove them. I do believe that this is the time for thee to establish thyself in that which we may hope and trust will ensure thy respectability and prosperity in life, give thee true comfort, and make thee a support and blessing to us and to many others who have set their hearts upon thee."

Such earnest invocations were by no means unfrequent on the part of the devoted preacher when he wrote to the child he loved so well. Forster himself makes frank confession of the fact that he cannot attain to those heights of spiritual fervour on which his father dwelt; but even in this time of his budding manhood, and when distance makes anything in the nature of parental control

impossible, we find him constantly striving to act in conformity with his father's wishes, so far as he is able to do so without falling into the error of professing to be something more than he actually was. Writing to Barclay Fox in September of this year, laying plans for a tour which they were to take jointly through Devonshire, he says, "There is nothing like a good, clear understanding of things beforehand; so I'll just mention one thing more. I find it will grieve my father so much if I do not use the plain language to people I may meet on our tour, that I must set out with the intention of so doing. I thought it best to tell thee of it, because, though of course such intention need not affect thy conduct at all, yet, as judging of thee by myself, it might surprise, perhaps bother thee rather. It is better thou shouldst know it before the place is fixed, though I do not suppose thou wouldst allow such a thing to derange the plan. . . . I find my mother, supposing thee to have influence with scientific men, has been writing thee an epistle on cruelty. Don't let it bother thee; but if thou shouldst have a good and easy opportunity to preach to anybody upon those abominable living experiments, and let her know thereof, she will never be tired of holding thee up to the admiration of all the lads and lasses within hearing, and it will be a great kindness to her, at any rate, for she has been reading those dreadful things about galvanized frogs and impaled dogs, etc., till she is the

same herself as if she had a continual shock of galvanism about her."

The "plain language," it is perhaps superfluous to explain, is that style of speech peculiar to the Friends, which has now, like their peculiar dress, become practically obsolete amongst them in their intercourse with strangers. It cannot have been an easy matter for a high-spirited lad of eighteen, who was about to start with a companion on a holiday tour, to undertake throughout his journey to make use of phraseology which, as he himself knew full well, would certainly expose him to the ridicule of the vulgar and the intolerant. This, however, was by no means the hardest trial to which he had to submit for the purpose of showing that implicit obedience to his father which throughout his life he regarded in the light of a sacred duty. The "cottage ladies" were among the dearest and best of his circle of friends at Norwich. He visited them regularly; he read with them, he corresponded with them, he was inspired by them to undertake work which was calculated to employ all his energies of mind and body in noble fields of public usefulness. On their part they entertained for him feelings of almost motherly affection. Their letters, and especially those of Miss Anna Gurney, show that they regarded him not only with esteem, but with confidence and pride. They perceived thus early his uncommon powers, and believed him to be destined

for a life of no ordinary distinction. They proposed, on one occasion during his stay in Norwich, to take him with them as their companion on one of those extended continental journeys in which they, from time to time, indulged. It would be difficult to imagine a proposal more delightful to an ardent and ambitious youth than this. Forster, at all events, hailed it with something like rapture. But the consent of his father had to be obtained. This consent was refused upon grounds which to an outsider certainly seem wholly inadequate. The disappointment must have been a keen one to Forster; but he submitted to it not only without a murmur or remonstrance, but with a manifest desire that his father should have no idea of the magnitude of the sacrifice which he had imposed upon his son. This little incident is but one of many which might be related in connection with this period in Forster's life. The good man whom he was proud to claim as his father, and to whom he was tenderly attached, was at times very trying to the youth by reason of his almost morbid timidity, his want of decision, and his devotion to ideas with which his son could not have much sympathy.

It was during this period, however, when he was still learning his "business" as a maker of camlet in the warehouse of Mr. Robberds, that Forster first began to take his own part in public affairs. A nephew of Thomas Fowell Buxton, and

constantly under the inspiring influence of the cottage ladies, it would have been strange, indeed, if he had not been interested in those great questions of public morality with which the name of Buxton may be said to be historically associated. We find him discussing with Miss Gurney a paper written by her on the relations of England with uncivilized nations, and asking the advice of his uncle as to whether it would be wise for him to raise an agitation on the apprenticeship question. There were other directions, as the following letter indicates, in which he was seeking to find an opening for public work.

To ROBERT BARCLAY FOX.

"Norwich, 10th, 7th mo., 1837.

". . . 11*th*.—This is my birthday; nineteen years of wisdom have passed over my head now, my boy. Well, if the next three years have not more stir in them than all the other nineteen it shan't be my fault. By-the-bye, I become a salaried clerk to-day, with £60 salary the first year, and £100 the next. One thing is plain to me, that we are all of us too much bound down by custom and by an enslavement to the common jog-jog way of doing things, for I am sure that many an outlandish project which bears the appearance of absurdity, only appears so because people suppose that it is to be effected by the usual means; such projects must in reality be executed by out-of-the-way—

extraordinary means, which after all are often very nearly as easy, sometimes easier, than the common humdrum way of doing things. Thou asked me about my essay on 'Capital Punishment.' I did write one, and did take it to a bookseller, but he was no ways inclined to take it at his risk, and I was noways inclined to take it at my own, so there the affair stuck; but he was very civil, and it answered one good thing, of my getting an introduction to one of those disagreeable, powerful beings—booksellers. At present I am writing for a prize of £50 offered by the Aborigines Society. My great literary ambition is a liberal, literary, entertaining, philanthropic magazine; one which should be cheap enough to get a large circulation, if it deserved it; one which should have a decided religious tendency, without being so regularly religious as to drive people away from it; which would show that there can be innocent amusement, and which should not attempt to check, but rather to turn to good purposes the radical renovating spirit of the age. What piece of foolery is the fellow up to now? thou wilt stay. Stop a bit, Barclay. When Hassan ben Something, the founder of the sect of the Assassins, was a friendless, powerless fugitive, he said, 'Give me two friends, and I will crush the power of the Khalif.' He did crush the power of the Khalif. I say, 'Give me but one friend, and that friend thyself, and we will establish a magazine, and will get money and

power and do good.' Allow me to say, Barclay, my dear friend, thou hast not ambition enough. I am sure I do not wish to flatter thee, for I hate flattering anybody but myself; but thou hast undoubtedly *very* considerable power, strength of genius, and, what's more, control over this strength; and, besides, thou art not obliged to be such a slave to the search after filthy lucre as poor me. Such powers as these were not given thee, excuse me, merely to make thee popular, but to make thee useful, and also, though much the lower motive, to give thee a name and power amongst thy fellows. I have very low motives mixed up with my ambition, I know, self-interest, etc., driving me on, but still I flatter myself that I have sometimes a violent desire to do good in my generation. Now thee see this magazine would unite both motives. Our youth is not against us. A new magazine ought to be young and ardent. Anyhow, we two young fellows, one soul, as it were, if we can't (get) up something between us more shame to us; for I take it that when two fellows are united in friendship, as we are, their united mental powers are not double, but rather the square of the power of each, they help one another so much. However, pray write very soon, and let thy letter name a *very* early time of coming to see me, and we will look at one another's airy castles. Thou MUST come SOON. Thou wilt be most thoroughly welcome to everything we

have; thou know'st what a poor humble way we live in, but I know thee too well to fear thy minding that. . . . My very respectful love to thy parents, and most humble desire that they let thee come at once. Oh, dear, how I should like some fun.

"Thy very affectionate friend,

"W. E. FORSTER.

"Pickwick is my great comfort."

The year 1837 passed somewhat uneventfully over his head. One event of importance in the family circle it did indeed witness, the removal of which mention has already been made of his father and mother from their home at Bradpole to Norwich. In March they took a house in the Earlham Road, and their son went to reside with them. At this time, as he records in his diary, they were all three "very low," Forster himself being much depressed regarding his prospects in life. Robberds was not prospering, and it seemed to the ardent and ambitious youth, that he himself was never likely to make his way in the world if he continued at Norwich. Still there were diversions in his life of which he made the most. His visits to the cottage ladies were regular, and he never failed to meet with the kindest and most sympathetic welcome. He became a teacher in the spring of the year, in a Sunday school established by the Norwich meeting of the Society of Friends, and about the same

time he took an active part in connection with a preaching mission conducted by leading Friends in the country around Norwich. It should be explained that it was customary, when recognized preachers of the society engaged in these missions, for young friends to accompany them for the purpose of summoning the meetings. His diary for 1837 affords glimpses of this and other incidents in his life at this period, as the following extracts will show:—

"21*st*, 4*th* *mo*.—After some changes it was settled that I should go on the box with J. and H. Backhouse and E. Kirkbride round the country, where they are going to hold public meetings. This was very pleasant for me, particularly as there was hardly any business at the warehouse. Off we went about two, and went through Loddon and Beccles to Lowestoft, from which place, after many changes and a tea, I sallied forth to Friends at Pakefield on a sky-raking post-horse. I did as I was bid to the best of my ability.

"1*st*, 5*th* *mo*.—Got up early to give my first notices for a public meeting, which with a young Friend, Wright, we did pretty fully through the town. There was a meeting with Friends at Pakefield in the morning. We breakfasted at S. Blakeley's, I firing off notices from the box as we went, to the great delight of J. Backhouse and disgust of E. Kirkbride. Fine and interesting meeting. Methodist meeting-house full.

"*3rd, 5th mo.*—Rode twelve miles before breakfast to get some fossils for Anna of a little old farmer who lives by himself beyond Pakefield, and has a most capital collection.

"*4th.*—We stopped at Yarmouth all day. Very poor public meeting there.

"*5th.*—We left Yarmouth about nine. Long stage to North Walsham—four hours. Lunched there. Went on to Northrepps Hall. Pleasant visit there and at the Cottage. Uncle B. most kind; gave me the most generous present of £20, and was very sociable about capital punishment. We went on to Holt that night, stopping some time at Cromer, where we met my dear father.

"*6th.*—Stopped at Holt all day; very pleasant people. Cram full, and very interesting meeting; my father and Hannah Backhouse preaching in Methodist meeting-house at Holt. I have very much enjoyed being this way with H. Backhouse."

A little later in the year came the dissolution of Parliament, consequent upon the Queen's accession.

From his diary.

"*18th, 7th mo.*—The Queen dissolved Parliament in person yesterday. Two candidates on the Whig side came down last evening, Ben Smith and Mountford Nurse. Both parties cooping with all their might. Blue and white beginning.

"24*th*.—. . . Went to the nomination of the city candidates this morning. The nomination was at eight. Went in with the mob into the lower court. Great rush when the door was opened. Lost John and my walking-stick; got my arm caught for some time, and broke my watch-glass in my watch-pocket. When the crier demanded attention for the reading of the Act against bribery and corruption, he burst out a-laughing at the end, in which he was followed by the sheriff, candidates, and almost everybody else. Sir Robert Harvey proposed the Marquis of Douro; his father, Scarlett; Mrs. Southwell's son, Smith; John Robberds, Nurse; with Dr. Evans's most violent secondment. The show of hands much in favour of the Blues. The Tories demanded a poll, and then everybody marched off, after three cheers for Smith and Nurse. All done in forty minutes.

"25*th*.—. . . About a quarter-past six, three stage coaches went past. About half-past seven, two came back with about forty purples—cooped voters —and their guard. About nine I sallied off to take observations. At the Magdalen Ward booth, I saw some dreadful cases of voting drunken people, both Whig and Tory: one in which the man could hardly speak, and there were two men roaring 'Smith' and 'Nurse' in his ears. I went to all the polling-places in the course of the time. About three I saw some furious bludgeon-fighting in Palace Plain—the police taking bludgeons from

some Tory hired countrymen. The mayor and sheriff were there. One of the police was badly wounded by a bludgeon. The soldiers were sent for, and then, the mayor thinking he could do without them, George Everett, the sheriff's son, a boy, and myself were sent to stop them. We very soon met them in the road leading from the Plain to the barracks, trotting forward with their swords drawn. We held up our hands and partially stopped them, but the mayor altered his mind and they came on. The policemen had got the better; but the soldiers soon cleared the place. The hiring was traced home to D——, a Tory tradesman, who was taken and clapped into the sheriff's carriage. The poll was not officially declared to-day; but it was believed that one Tory at least was in. Dined and drank tea at Earlham. Slept there also.

26*th*.—Both the Tories in: the lowest majority twenty.

In December of this year both Mr. and Mrs. Forster were absent from their home upon preaching expeditions, their son remaining at Norwich engaged in his work at Mr. Robberds's. They returned before Christmas, and again there was serious debate, and much anxiety with regard to William's future. Finally (January 8th, 1838), it was settled, with the consent of Robberds, that Forster should temporarily give up his place in the warehouse, his father resolving that until some

more suitable employment could be found for him, he should spend his time in studying classics, modern languages, and essay-writing. "A very disagreeable necessity," is the comment of the diary, "but the best that can be done." Fortunately, however, his way was to be made smooth in a somewhat unexpected fashion. His health not being very good at this time, his father proposed that he should make a journey to the North of England, where there were many old friends. He left Norwich for Darlington, where he stayed with Jonathan and Hannah Backhouse and their family, with whom he afterwards became very intimate.

Early in this year he had been engaged in assisting his uncle in preparing material for speeches and articles upon the slavery question, and had even won commendation from Mr. Buxton for the intelligence and the steadfast perseverance which he displayed in his task. Indeed, from this time forward uncle and nephew began to correspond regularly on public questions. At Darlington it would appear that Mr. Buxton's views upon some points in connection with the question of apprenticeship, were not altogether in favour, and Forster mentions in his diary that he had to defend them against the opinions of others. It is clear that he delighted in argument, and that he had already learned how valuable intelligent controversy may become as a method of education.

The uncompromising spirit which distinguished the man was indeed already evident in the youth, and there was no holding back of an honest opinion merely because it did not happen to be popular with the company in which he found himself. "I was teetotalish for my stomach's sake, before I left Norwich," he remarks in his diary at Darlington; "but they are so violent here that I take a little wine for spite's sake." He greatly enjoyed his stay with his good friends at Darlington, whatever might be his differences of opinion with them. He accompanied Hannah Backhouse—who was famous among the Friends of the North as a preacher—upon several of her religious journeys, and records his deep admiration for her character. He visited Durham, and being anxious to see Ushaw College, called upon the local Catholic priest, and introduced himself as being, "as thou seest, a member of the Society of Friends, a connection of the Backhouses, and a nephew of Fowell Buxton, who is travelling over the country seeing all he can, and who wishes very much to be allowed to look over the Catholic College of Ushaw." The gentleman whom he thus addressed showed every disposition to oblige him, and having given him a letter of introduction to the President of Ushaw, received in return from Forster a bundle of slave trade papers. After getting a peep at Newcastle and South Shields, in both of which places Mrs. Backhouse preached, he went back to Norwich,

where, however, his days of sojourning were already numbered.

This journey to the North of England formed a turning-point in Mr. Forster's life. Then it was that he first formed that attachment to the people of the North and to their modes of speech and action which remained with him to his latest days an enduring and a growing passion. Reviewing the results of his visit, he remarks that he has "thoroughly seen the activity of Durham, which makes me sigh over the inactivity of Norwich, and has got an intimate love and acquaintance of the Backhouses." It is not surprising that, having given up his work in Norwich, his thoughts should naturally have turned in the direction of the place where he had not only spent many happy days in the company of thoroughly congenial friends, but where he had found himself in the midst of scenes of public and commercial activity of which he had certainly never seen the like in Norfolk. An opening was found for him in the woollen mill of the Peases, at Darlington. An extract from his diary for July 24th, 1839, tells the tale of his removal from Norwich.

"I have been a wicked long time without writing up my journal. This blank interval has been the most full of events of any period of my life. I must just run over them. I attended the last week of the yearly meeting, and had a very pleasant time before it and after it. Uncle Buxton

employed me in getting up facts for him upon Mahomedan, Northern and East Coast slave trade. About a week after yearly meeting, Barclay came down and gave me a most pleasant and delightful visit for rather more than a week. We went over to Northrepps for two nights. About a fortnight after this, on the seventh day of the week, and fourth of this month, I left Norwich for Darlington, Joseph and Henry Pease having most kindly agreed to allow me the run of their mill to gain a knowledge of wool and wool-spinning. . . . My father left me to-day, having spent a few days here on his return from Westmoreland. Our time together has been most pleasant, and I think he has gone off with his spirits re-fitted. What a comfort. My mother seems also to be in better spirits. My occupation is wool-sorting, under teaching of experienced North countrymen, gruffish, intelligent, in the main civil. Go to work at six; breakfast, eight; dine, half-past one; leave off, six. An hour for breakfast, an hour and a half for dinner. Employment dirty drudgery; standing tiring; bear it heroically, because I hope it will do me good. Peases most kind in opening things to me. Friends generally most kind, opening their houses in a most hearty way for me to pop in when I like. . . ."

A few days before making this entry in his journal he had written to his father.

"July 18th, 1838.

"I am thoroughly settled into wool-sorting, with my slip paper cap and shears. My hours as yet at the mill have been from six to six, with an hour for breakfast, and an hour and a half for dinner, the same as the men, with the exception of an hour more for meals, which the length of my walk (ten minutes) renders necessary. I think my friends are satisfied with my hours. They are my own choosing, and longer than what Edward Pease proposed. I have been punctual with exception of this morning, when, owing to rather a bad headache—better now—I did not go out before breakfast. I breakfast at eight, dine at half-past twelve. I stand the whole time, which is tiring as yet, but I hope soon to get used to it. The employment is very dirty; but of course I do not mind that nor the length of the hours. The only thing I do mind, and that I cannot conceal from thee, though of course I should not tell my friends here, is its tedious drudgery, the little employment for one's thoughts, which makes me very glad to get over each hour of work. However, if it be drudgery that will tell, I hope I am man enough to bear it, and in time not to mind it; but I do think that my stay here ought not to be employed entirely in this part of practical work, but that if I could for part of the time have some part in the counting-house, the practical knowledge of the clerking in a great concern would, considering my little experi-

ence in it, be of as much use to me as anything else. I think, from what Edward Oxley says, this would not be difficult. However, all this can be talked over when thou comes. Only I wish thee to understand that it is my full wish not to regard present comfort or ease to the prejudice of the excellent opportunity afforded me by the great kindness of the Peases, of which I am determined to make the most at all costs. I see more than ever the necessity of writing a decent hand, and shall attend systematically to it in the evenings as soon as I get sufficiently little tired. I do hope, my dear father, thou art getting on pretty comfortably: Friends are very frequent in their kind inquiries about thee."

It was not merely his handwriting which he was anxious to improve during these evening hours which now furnished his sole opportunity for relaxation after his long day of tedious labour in the mill. "I do not know whether you are going to send a parcel," he writes to his parents (September 22nd, 1838), "but if you are, please send Abbot's 'Trigonometry,' Hamilton's 'Conic Sections,' Lacroix's 'Differential Calculus,' and especially Taylor's 'Elements of Algebra.'" Somewhere about the same period he met with Hartley Coleridge, and his reminiscences of that interesting and unfortunate man of letters are worth preserving:

[Undated] 1838.

"I got back to Sedbergh about five on third day. Hearing from Kendal that Hartley Coleridge was staying at Sedbergh, I wrote a note to him asking him to take tea with me as Sarah Fox's relation. . . . The next day was rainy, and most dull was the prospect, but happily I met H. C. in the street, and he spent the day with me and read me several of his unpublished sonnets. It was such an intellectual treat as I never had before. He is a strange compound of eccentricity, immense power of reasoning and imagination, amiability, simplicity, and utter want of self-command. I should think his conversation was equal to his father's. In fact, those who know him think it to be so. I never heard anything like it. But—poor fellow—I had the greatest difficulty to keep him sober. But I did so. Coleridge is fat, one-sided, about five feet high, eyes dark, hair gray or black. He is a most strange-looking mortal, and worth observing if thou meets him in the street."

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CHAPTER IV.

FIRST ATTEMPTS AT PUBLIC WORK.

It might well have seemed to Forster that twelve hours a day of arduous drudgery in the woollen mill, followed by a certain number of hours in the evening devoted to mental improvement, were work enough. But the young man's ambition was not to be denied. He had already marked out for himself his own path in life. To the end of his days he might be compelled to earn his living as a manufacturer; but at least he would devote all his surplus time and spare energy to public work. There are not many youths of twenty, however, who, situated as Forster was at this time, and indeed throughout his stay in Darlington, would have been either willing or able both to undertake and to perform so much in the shape of public duty. At this period his uncle, Mr. Fowell Buxton, had retired from Parliament; but instead of indulging in the repose to which his years and his labours entitled him, he was bent upon completing the labours of his public career by striking a final

blow at the slave trade, and by doing something to open up the dark continent to the humanizing and civilizing influences of legitimate commerce. The pioneer of not a few great reforms of world-wide bearing, he was now foremost in endeavouring to draw the attention of the people of England to the possibility of saving Africa from the horrors of the slave trade by developing its industries and its commerce. He spent the spring of 1838 in London, preparing, with the assistance of his son-in-law, Mr. Andrew Johnston, a statement on the subject of the commercial development of Africa, which he was anxious to submit to the then Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne, and to his colleagues in the Cabinet. All through the summer and the autumn of the year he worked hard at his task, verifying his statements, we are told, "by evidence of first-rate authority, both naval and military." Among those who assisted him in the work, no one was more energetic or more zealous than his nephew, the young wool-sorter at Darlington. Mr. Fowell Buxton, as has already been stated, had great confidence in Forster's judgment, and young as the latter was, he entrusted him with the task of getting up not a little of the evidence upon which the appeal to the Government was to be founded.

The story of Mr. Forster's life cannot be made to include the story of the agitation against the iniquitous slave trade carried on by the Spanish, Portuguese, and Brazilians, after Wilberforce had

put an end to the same iniquity under the British flag. It is necessary, however, to a full understanding of Mr. Forster's public work, that his relations with his uncle, and his share in the movement for carrying aid to the Africans, should be made clear.

How he stood with Mr. Fowell Buxton at this time may be gathered from the following letter addressed by the uncle to his nephew :—

"Northrepps Hall, August 28th, 1838.

"DEAR WILLIAM,

"Thanks for your letter, which I did not receive till after the day you were to see Montgomery Martin. I am very happy to find that you have a few spare hours per day, which you can devote to the slave trade. Depend upon it, you shall have something to do. I will send you a copy of my book, and you will see what I am aiming at. Don't show it about, as it would ruin all, if it got out. Between ourselves, Pease is trying to get it for Brougham; but his lordship shall not have it. This edition was for the Government. I have seen most of them, and was particularly pleased with what Melbourne said. The part I design for you is an account of the Northern Slave Trade, and a brief, but powerful illustration of the commercial advantages to be derived from that part of the world. Now, will you undertake the northern part, and have it ready for me in

grand style by November 1st? My work for the public is intended to come out in December . . .

"Your affectionate uncle,

"T. F. BUXTON."

It is hardly necessary to say that Forster undertook the task which was thus proposed to him, and for the remainder of that year all his leisure was devoted to the work of compiling statistics and drawing from them arguments on the subject of the Northern Slave Trade, and the good results which might be expected to flow from the commercial development of Africa. The enthusiasm which long years afterwards was evoked on behalf of General Gordon and his mission to the Soudan, was shown now in the cause of which Mr. Fowell Buxton was the leading representative and champion. Many letters written by Forster at this time still exist, and they all give proof of the thoroughness with which he went about the work he had undertaken. He never, to the end of his days, was satisfied with a half-knowledge of any subject upon which he had to give an opinion. His first demand in answer to his uncle's letter was for books, maps, and parliamentary papers, and his next for a clear indication of the manner in which he was to treat the difficult theme. Then, when he had been armed with these necessary materials, he threw himself into his work with almost passionate

eagerness. Soon after writing to him as above, Mr. Fowell Buxton sent him the private copy of his letter to Lord Melbourne, which, with the aid of Forster and others, he was now expanding into a volume. Its receipt was acknowledged in the following letter:—

"Darlington, 15th, 9th mo., 1838.

"My dear Uncle,

"I am much obliged to thee for thy book, which I have read with great interest, and which I will take care to keep to myself. The facts are so clear and telling that they make my blood boil, as if the slave trade and its horrors was a new idea; and as to the suggestions, they appear to me so convincing, not only as to the probable, but as to the speedy effect of legitimate commerce, that any of the ministers, who may chance to be blessed with consciences, must, one cannot but think, see the awful responsibility they incur by any unnecessary delay. *Most* glad should I be, if by doing anything, or going anywhere, I could be of the slightest use in the mighty cause.

"I should be very much obliged for my papers on the Northern Slave Trade. I really can do nothing without them, they have nearly all my authorities quoted at full length. I have no books here, nor can I get many of them, as they are out of print; and my memory I can by no means

trust to. . . . Dost thou mean to say more about the East Coast in the next edition? If I can be of any use on that point, please let me have my papers on Mombas. May I also ask whether the next edition is to be much larger than this? because I can then have some notion how long I should make my paper.

"I remain, thy affectionate nephew,

"W. E. FORSTER."

How anxious he was to complete his task by the time appointed by his uncle, is shown in a letter to Miss Anna Gurney, in the course of which he says:

"Owing to a convenient headache and sore throat, now gone, last Saturday I stayed from business, and cleared twelve hours odd work, and thereby got East Coast, Imâm, and Christian ready for copying by afternoon meeting yesterday.

"I shall get on merrily this week, for I had been obliged to give up sitting up late, owing to one of my hostesses, a desperately nervous body, being given to palpitating if any one sits up in the house, so that when she found out I should not finish till the end of this week, she declared she should die first. But she is gone, I am happy to say, into the country to-day, and I may 'gang my own gate,'—but you need not fear my doing myself any harm. I must tug at it till I get done, for this sort of work on one's shoulders pushes and pokes one on."

His task was duly executed, and on November 27th, he received from Mr. Andrew Johnston a letter which must have been very sweet to him.

"Colonial Office, November 27th, 1838.

"My dear William,

"Your paper on Eastern Slave Trade is *now* being shown to Lord Glenelg. I read it to your uncle on our way up yesterday. He is delighted with it, and kept saying as I proceeded, 'Capital!' 'Well done, Willy!' 'There he has it!' 'Still on the right scent!' 'He has entirely beat my book!' This must be most gratifying to you. I had, indeed, great pleasure in reading your performance. What a deal of labour it must have cost you!

"McQueen has given us some more materials for you which will accompany this. And Dr. Bowring is making up a large parcel of information as to Egypt and Abyssinia, which he promises to let us have next week. It will, of course, be forwarded to you. . . . Your uncle has seen Lord Glenelg and learns that the Government adopts his plan!! See fourth of Zechariah, 'What art thou, O mountain? A plain.'

"Ever affectionately,

"Andrew Johnston."

In a letter from Mr. Nixon (Sir T. Fowell Buxton's private secretary) to Mr. Fowell Buxton,

written in April, 1886, after Mr. Forster's death, we get a glimpse of him and his uncle :—

"In the account of the funeral service in the Abbey yesterday, it is stated that the coffin passed close to the statue of Mr. Forster's uncle, the first Sir Fowell Buxton. This remark took me back at once to a scene in the study at Northrepps. . . . It was, I think, in the thick of the preparations for the Niger expedition that William Edward Forster was staying at Northrepps. Your father was excessively busy, and suffering from overwork. A paper required to be written, at once short, strong, and telling. Your father was too ill to undertake it, and I was too much occupied to admit of the attempt that day. It occurred to Sir Fowell that his nephew was at hand, so he was summoned, and at once undertook the task. Next morning, after breakfast, the paper was produced and carefully read over in the study. The subject had been grasped and treated in the most masterly style; there was not a word too much or too little. Your father, who was much pleased and gratified, scarcely allowed his nephew time to leave the room before, looking at me over his spectacles—as you will well remember was his custom—he made this short remark, which we may well call a prophecy, 'I tell you what it is, Nixon—I shall not live to see it, but you may—that young man will make his mark.' "

Mr. Fowell Buxton's plan for the removal of

the evils of the African slave trade, it should be explained, comprised the following points: (1) to impede the traffic; (2) to establish legitimate commerce in Africa; (3) to teach agriculture; (4) to impart education. This involved, among other things, the formation of a trading company with power to acquire lands in Africa, and it was for the purpose of effecting this that the ill-fated Niger expedition was undertaken. It was at first hoped that this expedition, which was undertaken under the sanction and with the assistance of the Government, would have a speedy and brilliant success, and those who had been most active in influencing public opinion in favour of the movement for putting an end to the chronic miseries of Africa, were not less prominent in advocating the interests of the company formed for the settlement of the country bordering on the Niger. The scheme, however, was not without its strenuous opponents; and, strange to say, some of the most implacable of those opponents were men who were themselves devoted to the great cause of abolition. Of these by far the most prominent and powerful was Mr. Sturge. Sturge opposed Mr. Buxton's plan, partly because it introduced the trading element into a philanthropic enterprise, and still more strongly because it relied or appeared to rely upon force; for one of the proposals made by its author was that the British squadron in African waters should be strengthened in order

that it might more effectually put down the infamous traffic in human flesh. It is needless now to revive the old controversy. Sturge was true to the principles of his sect; whilst Fowell Buxton, who as has already been said was not a Friend, showed the more vigorous and the more practical spirit in the proposals he made for dealing with an evil which was equally abhorred by both.

That which is of interest as denoting the bent of the young man's character, was the line which William Edward Forster took in this controversy. Quaker though he was, he clung stoutly to the views of his uncle. His father, on the other hand, was somewhat inclined to the more pacific and negative policy of Sturge, who believed that the only way in which the slave trade could be put down was by putting an end to slavery itself, this end of course being achieved by moral suasion alone. Forster was then in his twenty-first year. Already, as has been seen, he had lent valuable aid to Mr. Fowell Buxton in the preparation of his plans and arguments. He now took up the defence of the scheme with a vigour and a maturity of thought and expression which the most impartial of observers will admit to have been remarkable in so young a man. It is interesting to see how in this, almost his first appearance in the field of public controversy, the essentially practical character of his mind displayed itself.

"How I wish," he writes to his aunt, April

5th, 1839, "I could give myself up to the cause entirely! I have disposed of all my copies" (of the book) "but one; I hope to good. I talk legitimate commerce everywhere, and I always find persons to acknowledge its reasonableness. . . . Sturge has, I see, invited all delegates for the day after to-morrow. I do not fear him, provided there be fair-play; but we must remember that he has twenty tongues and pens at work where we have one, and my great fear is that he will succeed, not in pushing forward his own plans, but in prejudicing the country philanthropists against Uncle B.'s, by the constant reiteration of 'no indirect sanction to any armed force,' 'abolition of slavery the only means of abolishing the slave trade,' so that if Uncle B. finds that the voice of the country is wanting to push ministers on, or even if they call for it to warrant them in any expense, he may not be able to raise that voice just at the needful time. Have you any choice morsels for country newspapers? I could get them in at Newcastle, Sheffield, and Durham; by means of William Leatham, in Yorkshire; Barclay Fox, in Falmouth; and I think I could manage them for Glasgow and Edinburgh."

Part of his work at this time was that which is mentioned in the last passage of the foregoing extract. No man believed more fully than he in the power of the press, and he was most active in securing through the leading papers in the north of

England the means of influencing public opinion in favour of his uncle's plan. He used his own pen with success in some of these papers; but he did still more in the way of inspiring others. Nor was this all. He saw clearly that the anti-slave trade cause was in danger of being ruined by the growing antagonism between his uncle's party and the Sturgeites, and with a courage and a force which were indeed beyond his years, he ventured to counsel even his uncle, the veteran philanthropist, as to the dangers which he might incur if he set himself in open opposition to Sturge's movement.

"Will you bear with me," he writes, April 12th, 1839, "if I send you two or three ideas, crude as they may very likely be, which have occurred to me, as to the prevention as much as possible of his (Sturge) doing us any harm? First, as to making use of it. So long as they keep to exciting the country upon the facts of the slave trade, they do unmixed good, because they raise a feeling which will make ministers feel they must do something. Could not Uncle Buxton then, on the one hand, by means of his friends in their camp, so control their movements, as to get a resolution passed at their public meeting in Exeter Hall, calling upon ministers in strong terms to make some new efforts; and on the other hand, by means of Dr. Lushington or some one of his friends in the House of Commons, and in his private interviews with the ministers, *show them that their*

credit as a ministry as well as humanity, *demand that they should make* such efforts; in short, that they should get Fernando Po? Does Uncle B. think that Lord Palmerston is so earnest after this object, that no motive of policy would make him more so? Even if the Sturgeites pressed upon ministers a plan of their own, still the country generally, and Parliament, would for a time at least, be satisfied if they brought forward any reasonable scheme; and their scheme, we know, would be ours, partly because it is the only one they are convinced of, and partly because the other would be mighty inconvenient, one of its main points being a treaty with Spain and Brazil, by which they are to agree to abolish slavery, on condition that we give them a British market for their sugar and coffee, by lowering the bonus on West India produce, which would of course put the West India interest into a fury at once. Next, as to preventing harm or prejudice from Sturge's movements. I must repeat my belief, that if by a letter from Uncle Buxton or otherwise, as you may think best, it was clearly placed before that party; that the one scheme is directed against the supply, the other against the demand; that if either the supply or demand be stopped the slave trade must cease; that so vast an evil ought to be attacked, if possible, both ends at once; that such attacks cannot hurt, are utterly independent of and must assist one another; that Sturge is probably confounding the

attempt to stop the supply with the attempt to stop the conveyance of the supply to the demand, which both parties equally acknowledge to be fruitless; and that, in short, allowing all manner of honour and glory to Sturge's scheme, the abolition of slavery is *not the only way* to abolish the slave trade, and no true friend to the negro would say it was;—I think, I say, that if such sentiments were laid before the Sturge party, they would, at least a great portion of them, listen to them, and thus people would be kept unprejudiced, until we were able to come out fairly, show ourselves, and challenge all prejudice or opposition."

This is but a portion of a long letter in which the practical question of how best to turn an agitation which threatened to be dangerous to his uncle's movement into a source of strength was discussed with masterly fulness and freedom. Still carrying on the campaign, Forster went to Manchester to try and move the Chamber of Commerce to support the Buxton plan. Before going he remarked in a letter to Miss Gurney: "It is from Cobden that opposition will come, if it comes at all; but I trust that the book will make him hold his tongue. He is evidently a clever and very fluent man, but likely to mistake a crotchet for a principle and stick to it like a leech." In his future life Forster himself showed that there was no man of his time who was less likely to "mistake a crotchet for a principle" than himself; and it

was this very readiness to sacrifice his mere crotchets in order to secure the triumph of his principles—in other words, to sacrifice the non-essentials to the essentials—that led his political opponents to write of him as "a trimmer."

His father, who was evidently more anxious that he should stick to business than that he should take thus early an active part in public affairs, was not altogether pleased with him for having gone to Manchester on such a mission; and on May 30th, Forster had to write explaining why he went. He went on in the same letter to speak of his position at Darlington and his business prospects, regarding which both he and his father were naturally very anxious:—

"With regard to business, I do most fully agree with thee that I ought to make use of every advantage I can, and especially to endeavour to gain a character for business habits; and I trust that I do contend against the irksomenesses of my situation. I am reading works on machinery and am striving after knowledge on that point. The great irksomeness is that the hours of business are long, and of course I feel it right to be there; but time hangs very heavy, because I have nothing actually to do now that I have acquired the positive art of sorting; only things to look at, and it is very difficult as well as disagreeable to look on for hours at such things. It was very different with Joseph Pease when he learnt the

business, or with any young person who learns a business with a view to taking a part in that business, because he always has some post or office which exercises his mind, and occupies at least a great part of his time. I have nothing of this sort. I make these remarks, however, merely that thou mayst fully understand my position, not by way of complaining, for that would be both wrong and foolish; and in fact this is a trial which is not up to the standard, I am sorry to say, of thy trials, my dearest father, and indeed of those few I have had myself. . . ."

It was in the midst of these perplexities that a new prospect appeared to be opened before him. "Do you know," wrote his uncle on July 2nd, 1839, "a capital person to head the commission to go and make treaties on the Niger this autumn? He must be a first-rater?" On July 3rd, however, before receiving the inquiry which showed the confidence his uncle reposed in his judgment, he addressed the following letter to his father:—

"Darlington, July 3rd, 1839.

"MY DEAREST FATHER,

"I send thee the following extract from a letter I have received from Edward Buxton this morning. 'I heartily wish you could be in London now. My father is just finishing his second book, and daily and hourly wants such a secretary as you to correct his sheets and help in the work.

You know how much he wants assistance, and now he has neither Andrew nor Priscilla, and I am so much occupied that I can do nothing for him. I believe your coming to London for a month or two just now would have been of *essential service* both to him and the great cause, and he would certainly have asked you to come but that he fears your father would not like it.

"'I say this entirely on my own account, and in no way by the direction of my father; but I could not bear to let you go on at Darlington doing nothing of importance without letting you know that you might give my father material help, and save him a great deal of work in London.'

"This is all Edward wrote on the subject. I send it then in order that thou may see precisely how the matter stands. I will add the reasons which would have induced me to go off to London to-morrow, if I had not disliked to act without thy knowledge and permission. I will take the least important first. It would be very pleasant to myself; here I am laboriously kicking my heels—diligent by doing nothing; there I should be hard at work at the subject in which of all others I am most interested. I should be of help to my uncle, repay him in some measure for his many acts of kindness; for I do not at all doubt that he really does wish me to come up, and is prevented from asking me himself, solely because he does not wish to interfere between thee and me. These, however,

are reasons which I ought not to allow, and which I trust I do not allow to weigh for one moment against the wish of the kindest and most affectionate of fathers, who has already sacrificed for his son far more than he ought, and to whom I owe more than I ever can to any other person.

"My main reason is that I do really believe I should be giving some aid, however slight, in the great cause.

"In writing to thee I need not dwell upon my duty to do my utmost against the slave trade; thou hast thyself always inculcated it in me; nor would I for a moment be supposed to lay claim to any credit for being willing to do my part. I know too well how many selfish and unworthy motives tend to bring about this willingness; but they do not weaken the force of the duty. . . .

"I may just explain where I think I should be of aid. I should be able to give some little assistance to my uncle, lessen the time which it takes to bring his plan before the public; and so fully am I convinced of its probable success, if allowed a fair trial, that I feel as if every day in which this trial is unnecessarily delayed may cause the loss of hundreds of lives.

"While I write this I feel this conviction so strong, that I can hardly restrain myself from going off to-night.

"But this is not all;" he then urges all the reasons for believing he might serve his uncle and

'the cause,' and the letter concludes: "I have *written warmly* because I have long *felt warmly*, and I trust I shall long continue to do so; but I do hope I have not written either unkindly or undutifully. Pray forgive me if I have, I am sure I did not mean it.

"I can only add that I trust thou wilt send ever so short an answer by the next post after thou gets this; if it be an approval, I shall thank thee most heartily, and be very heartily delighted; if it be not, I must confess it will be a bitter disappointment, but I know that it will be from a view, though I cannot but think a mistaken one, for my good; but I trust it will not be so.

"I shall ask my mother to forward this if thou be not returned, and to let me know where thou art. If I do not hear from thee in the time in which thou wilt be able to write, I shall suppose that silence gives consent, and set off immediately, for if left to myself I should not delay one instant."

All the ardour of the young man who sees the way opening into a life towards which his tastes and aspirations are driving him, is breathed forth in this letter. But once again the father's cautious temperament clashed with the son's ideas and ambitions. The former's chief wish on behalf of the latter at this time was that he might obtain a clerkship, of which there seemed to be a prospect, in a bank in London. He failed to see that his

son would be brought any nearer to the realization of this object by his temporary employment as his uncle's secretary, and he placed a firm veto upon the proposal. It must have been a heavy blow to Forster, whose entreaties in the letter just quoted are pathetic in their unconscious vehemence. Yet he submitted to it with that dutiful obedience to the wishes of his parents which was never known to fail.

"Darlington, July 8th, 1839.

"MY DEAREST FATHER,

"I hasten to reply to thy very affectionate letter received this morning. I am sorry that my letter has given you both so much pain—very sorry; but, taking into account my views and feelings, I do not well know how I could have written otherwise. However, I do most heartily hope you will think no more about it. . . .

"Pray do not admit for a moment the notion that thy motives are misunderstood, or that any person suspects thee of any coolness on the slave trade. I trust that I shall never be insulted by hearing any such suspicion, nor do I believe that any person thinks it.

"At any rate, I understand thy motives, and know that it has been a real trial to thee, in fulfilling what thou believes to be thy duty as my father, to do anything which may be disagreeable to me." . . .

There are few who will not feel that it must have been hard for the generous and high-spirited lad, whose whole soul was burning with the desire to enter upon public work, to have to write in this strain almost on the eve of his twenty-first birthday. A far more revolutionary scheme than that of becoming private secretary to his uncle had now, however, been born of his youthful restlessness. The Niger expedition was being prepared for. His uncle had asked him if he knew of any one fit to lead it, and he had suggested among the men whose personal qualities seemed to render them eligible for such a post, Sir Edward Parry and Sir John Ross. "Latrobe, the traveller," also seemed to him to be such a man as was wanted. But followers as well as leaders were needed in the perilous expedition, the success of which was now the dearest object of Forster's life. So (July 7th, 1839) he writes to his uncle as follows:—

"Darlington, 7th, 7th mo., 1839.

". . . One word as to myself. On reading that thou proposed that agents should be sent with the autumn expedition by the philanthropic company, it flashed across my mind, if I am fit to take any part in this great work, is not this my place?

"I did not mention the subject in my last letter, because I thought it best to write about one thing at a time, and I did not wish to write hastily.

The idea has, however, gained ground with me ever since, and I now offer myself as one of the agents.

"As it transgresses none of my principles, and the engagement would only be for a limited time, I think it is a case in which I have a right to exercise my own judgment. So far as regards myself, I have calculated the difficulties and dangers, and am willing to run the risk. I very probably, however, am not fitted for the office, and it may be the height of presumption for me to have the smallest notion that I am; and if that be so, pray tell me, and there ends the matter. Still, I cannot help thinking that there might be an advantage in the philanthropic agent being a peace man. . . .

"Surely the philanthropic agent could be of great use, not only in obtaining all kinds of information, but in standing up for just principles during the making of the treaties, and endeavouring to make the natives understand our anti-slave trade views. Could he not be in some measure the representative of the philanthropic interest, and that of course without stepping out of his place or in any way interfering with the duties of the government officer? Whether I am fit to be such agent is quite another question.

"Never fear about my health. I have faith the climate would not kill me. (By-the-bye, 'I have a nephew there,' would not be a bad *argu-*

mentum ad hominem for thee to use on behalf of the climate.)

"As for money, I should be supported while engaged, and that is all I want. All I bargain for is present independence, and not to be asked to fight myself or to help others to fight. If those two requisites are secured, I care not by whom I am sent out. Thou wilt not be surprised at my being anxious for thy opinion on this matter, as soon as thou hast time.

"I may just add that the next week or two must be the turning-point in my life. If I be not speedily *committed* to the slave trade cause, I shall be committed to something else, and obliged, in great measure, to give it up. My stay here cannot be much longer, and a person one-and-twenty years old must, of course, find some way of keeping himself, and, when once in any business, I must give up my time to it. And it will be impossible to get *out*.

"With care, I trust, I should not meet with much opposition from my parents; but if thy opinion be in any respect favourable, I will write more on that head.

"Thy affectionate nephew,

"W. E. FORSTER."

Mr. Buxton demurred to the proposal, but did not at the moment negative it; so Forster writes again, the day being his twenty-first birthday:—

"Darlington, 11th, 7th mo., 1839.

"My dear Uncle,

". . . With regard to Africa, I deserve no credit for my proposal, because it really was my wish, and still continues to be so; though thy letter makes me see that I cannot go just yet, and that when I do go the responsibility must and ought to rest entirely on myself. However, I am of course all the more anxious to do what I can at home, and if I really can be of any help to thee the next few months in London, I am determined, if possible, I will. . . . I may add, and I do not mind to whom thou mention it, that I am both willing and wishing to give up all my time to the slave trade, and to take any post for which thou mayest think me fitted, and which is not at variance with my religious scruples, and by which I can live independently so long as I am engaged."

By way of postscript to this letter is a note to the cottage ladies:—

"My dear Cottage Aunts,

"If you see this, I just add this to say that I do think you are the kindest aunts ever nephew had. Your packet of letters was the first thing I saw this morning, and a most auspicious beginning of my manhood it was.

"I was just beginning a letter, when there comes a note from Hannah Backhouse, with whom

I dined, summoning me for a birthday sermon, I suppose, and as it is now half-past nine, I shall have no time now.

"Yours most affectionately,

"W. E. F."

The end of the proposal that he should go to the Niger and share the dangers of the actual expedition, as he had shared in the heavy labours connected with its birth, is to be read in a brief note from Mr. Fowell Buxton, dated September 27th, 1839. "I have a decided and inflexible opinion," says the writer, "that you must not go to Africa. In the first place, I really could not bear the anxiety I should have to endure on your account, and the injury I should have been the means of doing your parents. Secondly, I firmly believe that you would be of more use to the cause here, provided you are permitted to attend to it, than you would be if you were in Africa; in short, to the Niger you go not with my consent." So there was an end of the scheme which, if it had been carried out, would probably have sent the man who was destined by Providence to be the author of the Education Act, to perish prematurely on the West Coast of Africa. The story of the Niger expedition is almost forgotten now. It can be retold in few words. The movement in its favour excited widespread enthusiasm. On June 1st, 1840, a meeting was held in its support in

Exeter Hall, at which Prince Albert presided. Shortly afterwards Mr. Buxton received a baronetcy as a special mark of the favour with which both the Queen and the Government regarded his exertions on behalf of the people of Africa; and eventually, on April 14th, 1841, the expedition sailed. It consisted of three vessels, the *Albert*, the *Wilberforce*, and the *Soudan*, commanded respectively by Captain Trotter, Commander William Allen, and Commander Bird Allen. In due time the vessels reached the Niger, the waters of which were explored for more than 300 miles from the coast, and communications opened with the natives of the country. For a season all went well; but then fever appeared among the crews, and after a brief but gallant fight against it, the vessels had to retire. Of the 301 persons who composed the expedition, 41, including Captain Bird Allen, succumbed to disease, and the noble and well-meant enterprise ended in a disastrous failure.

CHAPTER V.

BRADFORD.

FORSTER's position at this time is made quite clear by his letters. He was drawn in opposite directions, by his personal tastes and ambition, and by the necessity which was laid upon him of making a living for himself. Writing in the spring of this year, 1839, to Barclay Fox, he said:—

"I am in a regular Cornish skew as to the future, like that thou and I were favoured with when we astonished the natives at Sidmouth—can't see an inch before me. I want to be at something in the way of getting a living, but don't know precisely what to be at. Uncle B.'s book is out—my part of it so incorporated with the rest that it is difficult to say which is which. The main part of what I wrote for him is in what is not yet printed. I am getting pushed forward in these matters quite as much as I like; or, rather, I like taking part in them so much that I do quite as much as is good for me, for my principal object must yet be to make myself independent—that

is plain. What a bother this forced worship of Mammon is! However, I am heartily glad that thou art playing at it so steadily and to good purpose, too."

We have seen how his work in Darlington was practically done. On July 19th, with the consent of his parents, he went to London, his plans for the future being still unformed. An arrangement was made soon afterwards, in accordance with which he entered for a time the office of Messrs. Sanderson, Fry, and Fox, in the Old Jewry, in order that he might acquire some knowledge of counting-house work and business correspondence. Before this arrangement had been made, however, he suffered, in common with the rest of the wide family circle, a heavy bereavement. His aunt, Miss Sarah Buxton, one of the two "cottage ladies" of whom such frequent mention has been made, and whose interest in Forster's career had been so warm and unceasing, died suddenly. She was at the time (August, 1839) at Bristol, with her loved "partner" and friend, Miss Anna Gurney. The latter desired to bring the remains home for burial in the churchyard at Overstrand, hard by the cottage which had been so long their home, and at her request William Edward Forster was sent to be her companion on the sad journey. Those who knew him best in later years were best acquainted with the womanly tenderness of his nature, the depth and the warmth of his sympathy with the

sorrowful. The following letter, written when he and Miss Gurney were nearing the end of their painful journey, is worthy of being preserved, because of the light which it throws upon this side of his character:—

"Barton Mills.

"My dearest Parents,

"Thus far are we on our sad journey. We left Oxford at five this morning; got here at ten. Cousin Anna is rather tired with her long journey, but not ill. She has gone to bed and to sleep. She is nervous just now, Hannah says, but she has been wonderfully supported throughout, and has been kept quite calm. I cannot help being very anxious, but I trust and fully believe we shall get to the end well. We intend to rest to-morrow, and I am sure we want it, and to start very early on second day morning, so as to get to the Cottage by the middle of the day. I have written fully to Asker at the Swan about the horses, thinking you might possibly be at Northrepps; but if my father is not, perhaps he would call and read it.

"With regard to your meeting Cousin A., I hardly know what to say. On the one hand is her *wish* to see you and my knowledge that both of you would do her good, and on the other her fear and my fear of new excitement, especially before the great trials of entering the Cottage. I think not only are you best able to judge for yourselves—

for my dearest mother—but for us too, and you must do so. . . .

"I am very well; rather tired, for I was up a little after four, and I must sit up for the Magnet, for I dare not trust the people at the inn, and Spinks, poor fellow! must have sleep, not having had it for nights; but I am not knocked up at all. This is indeed an afflicting, but a satisfying journey.

"Your very affectionate son,

"W. E. FORSTER."

At the close of the year we find him engaged in his new work at Messrs. Sanderson, Fry, and Fox's, all hope of a place in the Niger expedition having been given up, but not, as will be seen, all interest in "the great cause."

"6, Old Jewry, 14th, 12th mo.

"MY DEAREST PARENTS,

". . . I settled in last second day. That evening I spent at the Brewery. Next morning I breakfasted there. Third day evening I went up to an aborigines committee at Dr. Hodgkin's.

"Fourth day evening there was a large young party at Brick Lane. Fifth day afternoon I went with Sir G. Stephen to Aylesbury, to an anti-slavery meeting there. I do not know whether thou wilt hear of it from G. W. Alexander, but in case thou dost I may as well say I entirely disapprove and wash my hands of all Sir G.'s attack

upon the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, though I greatly approved of his praise of our plan. I preached to him all the way down to no purpose. I should have disowned publicly on my uncle's part that part, but it seemed hard to fly in the face of one's friend, especially seeing he was beat, but I did privately to Lord Nugent, to Alexander, and to the leading people at Aylesbury.

"I went from London by the three o'clock train, and returned to London by half-past nine yesterday. Seeing I have been very diligent in business, I do not think it was an unwarrantable excursion.

"Last evening I was at home, and so I shall be this. . . . I should be glad of my chess men, Shakespeare, and Percy's 'Reliques.'"

To BARCLAY FOX.

"6, Old Jewry, December 20th, 1839.

"MY DEAR BARCLAY,

"My silence has been shameful. I confess and repent. In fact so much so, that I should not think of relieving the gnawings of conscience by a base pecuniary mulct; moreover, to give to a society I disapprove by way of punishment to myself, is a sort of doing evil that good may come that suiteth not my present philosophical enlightenment. The fact is, I am and always shall be a bad letter-writer, but I trust I shall improve under this fourpenny dispensation. . . .

"Here am I in the house of one Samuel Theo-

bald, draper and Quaker, having the same lodgings as in days of yore thou mayst have known as occupied by the two Leathams, one after the other.

"I dine at chop houses when I do not visit, and find myself in breakfast and tea,—and am gradually falling into the habits of that selfish sullen and truly wild, because most undomestic animal, a bachelor. *Pray* do have some most urgent business to call thee speedily to town; there is nothing that would give me so much pleasure as to see thee, I have so many things I should be so glad to talk to thee about. I fought hard to get another bed, with especial reference to thy sojourn in it, in thy visits to Babylon, but that I found impossible. Of course thou wilt not neglect the bounden duty of yearly meeting; and I hope to see thee long before that. I find, upon looking into Genesis, that Cain built the first city, which, as he was possessed by the Evil One, very much confirms my previous notion that the Devil invented cities. Nevertheless, London has its advantages, and I had much rather live in it than in another city. And, indeed, in this short life of mine, my settlings have been so various and unsettled, that I begin to take a change with great nonchalance, putting confidence in my mother's hymn—

'A fig for the cares of this whirligig world;'

and still, repeat said hymn as often as I will, there is no getting rid of the too true fact that this life

is a struggle; at least I find it so, and a pretty hard one too. My leisure time continues pretty fully occupied with African concerns, and I must now leave off and go to see a true hearty old Navy Captain, Owen, who has knocked about Africa half his life, and has given me an invitation to call any hour between 8 p.m. and 2 a.m.

"Thine for good and I fear for bad also,

"W. E. FORSTER."

Throughout the year 1840 he remained at his post in London. The fact that he was living in town enabled him to take a more active part than he had done at Darlington in connection with his uncle's philanthropic work. We find him accordingly referring in his correspondence to the various meetings he has been attending in connection with the African project, and discussing the opium traffic and the opium war with warmth and vigour in his letters to Miss Elizabeth Pease, with whom he maintained the friendship he had formed at Darlington. His original lodgings with the Theobalds did not satisfy him, and he moved to a more open and healthy position at Hampstead. There is a passage in a letter to his mother, written shortly before his removal to these new lodgings, which bears testimony to that affection for animals which he retained to the last. "I have a most delightful black kitten sitting in my easy chair just now; a most refined, graceful, intellectual, amus-

ing puss. In fact she is altogether the charm of the habitation, and when I march off, which I shall do ere long, I shall elope with her in my pocket."

"The turning-point in his life," to which he had often referred in previous years, may be said actually to have come in this year 1840. Mention has been made of the fact that his father had strong hopes of being able to obtain for him a place in one of the London banks. It was really with a view to his qualifying for this that he had taken the place in London which he now filled. But all hopes of this kind were brought to an end in October, 1840, when it was found that no opening could be made for him in the bank in question.

His uncle, on becoming aware of this, offered Forster a place in his brewery. This offer—made at a time when he was in much perplexity as to his future course—was gratefully declined, because Forster felt that he could not conscientiously adopt brewing as a means of gaining a livelihood. It was generous on the uncle's part, when he wrote to his nephew after this refusal, to add the words, "I hold, however, still the conviction that you will never regret having acted under a conscientious impression." There were other businesses besides that in beer, where conscientious scruples came in to interfere with the ordinary dictates of self-interest. The following letter from the uncle to the nephew refers to a proposal that the latter

should enter a manufacturing concern which carried on a trade in slave-grown produce.

"Northrepps Hall, near Aylsham,
"November 9th, 1840.

"MY DEAR WILLIAM,

"I have hardly felt able to answer your private note, and yet it would be unfair to be silent.

"I really do not know how I should act with regard to a business in slave-grown produce. I certainly should be slow to entwine my interests with any slave system, and should have a greater degree of scruple than with regard to joining a brewery. All this only proves how impossible it is for one person to judge of the scruples of another. All I can say is (and it applies to all cases of perplexity), pray it out.

"Your affectionate uncle,
"T. F. BUXTON."

But the period of doubt and uncertainty as to his future, which had pressed so hardly upon him up to this period in his life, was now to close. It was in the winter of 1840–41 that he turned his eyes northwards to Yorkshire, and found a sphere which, both from the business and the political point of view, was worthy of his immense energy, at Bradford. Some time before Mr. Forster, senior, in the course of one of his mission journeys, had

met Mr. James Fison, head of the wool-stapling business of James Fison and Son, of Thetford, Norfolk. They were fellow-travellers in a stage coach, had fallen into conversation with each other, and had discovered that each was in some perplexity as to the future course of a son. Mr. Fison was a member of the Wesleyan body, and Mr. Forster found in him a congenial spirit. The acquaintance formed in the stage coach was kept up, and eventually it led to communications passing between the two men which resulted in William Edward Forster going to Bradford to join Mr. T. S. Fison, a son of Mr. James Fison, in business there as a wool-stapler.

Among the manufacturing towns of Yorkshire Bradford has always held a distinctive place. The energy and quickness of its inhabitants were noticed long ago by Thoresby, the historian, and contrasted with the comparative lethargy of the neighbouring people of Leeds. Both politically and commercially, Bradford was beginning to "make its way in the world" when young William Edward Forster first entered it, there to begin the battle of life on his own account, somewhere in the summer of 1841. The records which remain of the early part of his career in Bradford are comparatively slight. He began life there, as has been stated, as a partner in the business of Mr. T. S. Fison, and he lived in the first instance in lodgings in the town of Bradford.

In 1842 he added to his responsibilities by joining Mr. William Fison in partnership as a woollen manufacturer, under the name of William Fison and Company. The connection with Mr. T. S. Fison was continued for some years; but it was to the manufacturing concern in which Forster had Mr. William Fison as his partner that he chiefly devoted his energies; and in the year 1849 he withdrew from the wool-stapling business, and confined himself exclusively to his partnership with Mr. William Fison. That gentleman still survives; and the business in which he and Mr. Forster were so long engaged is now carried on by their sons, Mr. Frederick W. Fison and Mr. E. P. Arnold-Forster.

There can be no doubt, from the traditions which still linger in Bradford, that the future representative of the town in the House of Commons attracted a considerable amount of attention, almost from the commencement of his residence in the place. Of great stature, altogether unconventional in manner, and singularly indifferent to outward appearances, his was a figure which was certain to strike even the most careless of observers. Perhaps some of the legends regarding his appearance at that time have suffered exaggeration in the passage of the years; but there can be no doubt that there was much about him in the year 1841 to arouse the curiosity of those who met him for the first time in Bradford.

"We distinctly remember," says a writer in the *Bradford Times*, April 25th, 1868, "his first coming to Bradford in 1841, and the sensation he produced among the gentlemen standing on the steps of the old Exchange, just opposite to the then busy Piece Hall, as he took the aforementioned two or three steps at one bound, and passed with the rapidity of a steam locomotive or a racer into the large Exchange room. Many were the inquiries made as to who the curious-looking stranger really was? Where did he come from, and what was his business there? It oozed out, however, in the course of a few moments, that it was Mr. Thomas Fison's new wealthy partner, and numerous were the reports as to his pedestrian capabilities and his *love of books*—the latter being a very rare characteristic of a Bradford wool-stapler at the period to which we refer."

Even in his later years Forster was far too much occupied with the graver realities of life to trouble himself about his own appearance. In those early days he impressed his new acquaintances almost as much by this absorption in his work and its accompanying disregard for mere externals, whether of dress or manners, as by the remarkable ability of which he showed himself to be possessed. To the end of his life he preserved to a certain degree those characteristics which aroused interest and curiosity when he first settled at Bradford. He was apt to be absent-

minded, for when any subject engaged his attention he devoted his whole thought to it. He was unquestionably careless in his dress, and he was at times very blunt in his speech. It is, perhaps, a misfortune for any man to possess these outward characteristics, for too many persons in this world are inclined to judge men by externals merely. It was undoubtedly a misfortune when these characteristics were found in one whose destiny it was to follow the thorny path of the politician, where tact, suavity of manner, and a keen regard for the susceptibilities of those around him are almost essential to a man's success. But, after all, these externals are merely external; and Forster's early friends in Bradford soon discovered, as in later life the world at large did, that beneath the somewhat rough and unvarnished exterior was hidden one of the warmest hearts in the world, and a nature as truly sensitive as it was loyal and pure.

The business connection of Mr. Forster and Mr. Fison, which began in 1842, ended only with Mr. Forster's death. The two partners began as young men on borrowed capital and amid many adverse circumstances. They had to face many seasons of anxiety and depression. They were men themselves opposed in political opinions and in their views upon many of the questions of the time. Yet from the first day to the last of that long partnership an unbroken amity reigned between them, and the surviving partner now bears

his grateful testimony to the fact that never during their whole connection did a word, or even a look that was unfriendly, pass between Forster and himself. Testimony more honourable to both men could hardly be desired. It is as well that this should be said now, when we are dealing with the opening phases of Mr. Forster's business life in Bradford, because to say it here will prevent unnecessary reiteration in the future course of the narrative. The two young men who were thus launched upon life together seemed to find, even in their very differences, reasons for mutual sympathy and agreement, and together they fought their way, with an English tenacity of purpose, from comparative poverty to positions of wealth and comfort. It is due to Mr. Fison to say that, if Mr. Forster had met with a less kindly and considerate partner, his political career must have been greatly hindered and his own honourable ambition to a large extent thwarted. His own letters, with which the reader is already familiar, show that with all his natural yearning for political life, he was cut off from the achievement of the ends at which he aimed by the straitness of his means and the necessity laid upon him of making a position for himself in the world. To work for the public good was his passion, and from his youth upwards there was never a day when he lost an opportunity which presented itself of gratifying this desire of his soul. But before he could give

himself wholly to public objects and to public life, it was necessary that he should win for himself at least a moderate competence. This end he achieved by means of his business career at Bradford. It was a career honourable to himself in all its aspects, as will be seen during the course of this narrative. But his way was smoothed, and his burden lightened, by the constant loyalty and kindness of the friend whom he had been so fortunate as to secure for a partner.

The Bradford mill where the two young men began their business career occupied a portion of the site of the present Swan Arcade. Very soon after arriving in Bradford, Mr. Forster went to lodge at a hamlet called Bolton, a short distance from the town, in the house of Mr. Gaunt, a farmer. There was a malting attached to the farmhouse, and here his mother, on the occasion of her frequent visits to her son, was in the habit of holding religious meetings, which were largely attended, and are still held in remembrance by the older inhabitants of the district. The people of Bradford were not slow to discover that in the young manufacturer who had just come among them they had received a notable addition to the life and society of the town. Many interesting anecdotes, illustrative of his characteristic personality, are still current in Bradford. As has been said, he was not a man who could be easily passed over, even by a casual observer.

It is somewhat remarkable that both in his figure and his manner he partook largely of the characteristics of the people of the West Riding. Those who only knew him in later life found it hard to believe that he was not by birth a Yorkshireman. Indeed, he has been described by some anonymous critic as having the appearance of a stage Yorkshireman in the House of Commons. It was not in the West Riding, however, that he acquired those outward characteristics which savoured so highly of the genius of the place. He inherited them from his father's family. There is little doubt that the Forsters originally came from the Yorkshire dales, and it is no far-fetched fancy to assume that in his bluntness of speech, in his indifference to personal appearance, and in his physical stature and character, he furnished an example of the revival of a type of some far-away dalesman ancestor.

In a letter to his mother, dated August 22nd, 1841, he gives some account of a walking tour in Scotland, which he had made during his first holiday after going to Bradford. "I enjoyed my walk very much—grand wild scenery. I went from Inverness to the west coast of Rosshire, and then along the coast to Cape Wrath, the northernmost point of Scotland, and from thence by Tongue to Caithness, a part not much visited by tourists or sportsmen, and therefore exhibiting much of the characteristic manners of the Highlanders. I got

to one small inn, where even the landlady could speak no English." Now, as in his youthful days at Bridport, Forster was an enthusiastic pedestrian, and very soon after settling in Bradford his walking powers had become notorious. Whilst he was still engaged in the business of Mr. T. S. Fison, and before he entered upon his partnership with Mr. William Fison, the housekeeper of the former gentleman overheard a mason, who was at work at the mill, scolding an apprentice in words which are still remembered. "Thou idle hullet (owlet), thou shouldst stir thysen. Be like Long Forster, what walked to Colne and back" (thirty miles) "before breakfast." This physical activity of his was noticeable all through his life; but the reader will have ample opportunity of judging for himself of his powers when the story is told of his travels in various parts of Europe and the East. It was natural, and indeed inevitable, that during the early years of his business life Forster's energies should chiefly be given to the occupation in which he was engaged. He was never a man to do anything by halves, and he threw himself into his business as a woollen merchant and manufacturer of Bradford stuffs with the enthusiasm which was characteristic of his nature.

His beginning of a career as a Bradford merchant seemed to form a break in the continuity of his life. New fields of work were opened to him, and his sympathies were drawn into new

channels. The old feelings on the subject of slavery were not, indeed, dismissed from his mind; but now that an active life in a great manufacturing community brought him daily into contact with the working-classes, the current of his thoughts began to change. The claims of the poor at his own door began to press upon him more closely even than those of the oppressed and outraged negroes. The great social and political problems of our time forced themselves upon his attention, and overshadowed those purely philanthropic projects which had absorbed his interest hitherto. Carlyle's writings exercised their fascinating influence over his mind, and every day of his life during his first decade at Bradford seemed to be marked by a new stage in the growth of his active interest in the social politics of the time. A reminiscence of him, soon after he entered upon his life in the West Riding, is given in a letter written after his death by the Rev. W. Philpot, and I quote it here, though it looks so far ahead in Forster's life: "I learned to value him forty-two years ago. Some of us, among whom were Bradley and Plumtre, were reading in the summer at Cromer. I happened to be dining at North-repps, with the old Sir Fowell. After dinner, I was left with a man five or six years older than I was, acting as private secretary. I can see him now, standing with his back to the fire—tall, animated, earnest, forward-looking—and hear him

as he poured out with a fervour and a knowledge that was quite new to my experience, such a racy and original strain of talk about the interests of the people, that I was quite carried off my legs with delight, and I said to myself, 'You will make your mark.' When I got home, I took notes—meagre enough; headings and catch-words for memory—of what he had been saying. My last impression of him was, as he stood like a pillar behind the Speaker's chair (he had got me into the House), while the Irishmen who remained after the others had been turned out, were aiming their *bruta fulmina* at him. . . . My inward anticipation at Northrepps found a range beyond my imagination."

For a time after going to Bradford, he felt himself in a decidedly uncongenial atmosphere. The majority of those around him were too deeply immersed in the pursuit of wealth to have either leisure or inclination for purely intellectual pursuits. Yet almost from the first he found one or two congenial friends and associates in the place. Among these must be mentioned Mr. Lythall, a manufacturer, and a man of genial and refined mind, with whom he formed a close intimacy; Mr. Horsfall, another business man, who had many foreign connections, and through whom he was brought in contact with the life and thought of more than one continental country; and Mr. William Byles, the proprietor and editor of the

Bradford Observer, who remained his staunch and valued friend down to the day of his death, and who still happily survives. But after all, during those early years of his residence in Bradford, his chief friendships were with his own family circle. He kept up a constant correspondence, not merely with his father and mother, but with the Buxtons and with Barclay Fox. It is to Barclay Fox that he writes from Bradford as follows:—

"I have been confined to my room these last three days, by sore throat, and have meditated much on thy letter and its queries. My meditations are no ways clear, on the contrary, most muddy, but such as I can give, I send thee." (Here follows a long disquisition on the question of inspiration, concluding with the statement, "My idea of the inspiration of the Scriptures is what I imagine to be Coleridge's.") "Thanks for 'Man and the Reformer.' I had read it in the *Dial*. I admire the principle much, but not the practice. Thou must by all means get the *Dial*. Almost every article is worth reading. Emerson is by no means the essence of it. There are other quite distinct and independent minds. In that same fourth number there is a striking and most powerful article on the Unitarian movement in New England—curiously orthodox—showing the difference between Unitarianism, Pantheism, and Trinitarianism, and declaring for the latter. These transcendental writings have suggested to me

some ideas, which I should like to suggest to thee; but this letter is already far too long, and I must wait for the next.

"By-the-by, I have sent, by Christiana Hustler, Bamford's works to Sterling, which I shall be obliged to thee to give him."

It was through the Fox family that Forster had made the acquaintance of Sterling, an acquaintance which subsequently led to his forming some of the most valued friendships of his life.

To BARCLAY FOX.

"Bradford, March 22nd, 1842.

"DEAR BARCLAY,

"'For our country and friends
Let us damn private ends.'

Jacobite Minstrelsy.

"Being entirely tired of communing with my most unbearable self, for self-communion is pure running round in a circle, an everlasting reciprocity of dulness, I am constrained for self-relief to write to thee, being the easiest mark whereat I can shoot forth this same dullness, and having neither fact nor sentiment of my own, the above strikes me as an appropriate text on which to hook my moralizings, being in truth a pretty fair description of my present condition.

"For like as these homeless moneyless Jacobites, having their own selfish hopes and projects ruined, yet being forced by the nature of man to

continue hoping and scheming, burst forth into exuberant devotion to cause and country; so I, having, to say the least, come to a stop in life, or rather walking I know not where—all mist before my vision, 'skewed up,' nothing certain, except that sooner or later, whichever way I go, I must walk over the precipice — do feel myself most wonderfully possessed by philanthropic patriotism and friendship, actually to such a degree that my anxiety for thy welfare includes not only soul and mind, but also body, and I have fears lest the profligacy of our last night, backed by thy Truro wetting, may have increased the chalkiness of thy countenance even more than is desirable, and brought upon me the maledictions of sisters and parents; so please satisfy my scruples on that head.

"Again, my love to my own country, or rather fear for it, is just now exceeding. In sober truth, Old England does look in an awkward plight. She appears to me to have divers ugly symptoms.

"1. The increasing disproportion of property, growing value and power of capital, and difficulty to get it except by means of capital—the weight preventing the poor man from rising becoming more and more heavy—all tending to widen the distance between the labourers and the property men, and making the poor man more and more provoked with the rich man *because he is rich.*

"2. The population increasing at the rate of a thousand a day, with no war or cholera to drain

off. In truth many a man has little else to do, certainly nothing pleasant to do, except to get children.

"Up to a certain point misery and procreation appear to go or rather grow hand in hand.

"Last and worst. Demand for labour decreasing, at any rate not keeping pace with production of labour, and consequent growth of poverty amongst the masses, even to the extent of wide-spreading hunger, and this same hunger is apt to beget convulsion.

"All this lies on the surface, and is plain to truism, but I do believe the plainer facts are, the less they are seen — nine men out of ten are surprised by the fact of death: so shall we be surprised at convulsion when it comes.

"Nor, indeed, granting the powers that be, knowledge of the evil and will to remedy, do I see how they can help matters materially.

"The weight of vested rights, legal restrictions, long-established privileges, etc., has become so mighty a burden on John Bull's back, that it will break if not tossed off; and how toss off a bundle so compact without a tumble head over heels, I know not. My only hope is that he will choose a soft place to tumble in, and altogether perform the operation in a tolerably Christian spirit. . . .

"I am reading Carlyle vehemently, have ordered the 'Miscellanies,' and got 'Sartor Resartus,' which, to my surprise, I like, and have the presump-

tion to think I can sometimes understand. I can pardon him everything but his hard words; but Satan pokes his finger into all human works, and in Carlyle these breakjawisms evince his handy-work. . . .

"His pictures are, indeed, pre-eminently true, strong, and vivid, each line glares with light, it *will be seen*. As to the matter of his writings, my conception of them must as yet be the most superficial guesswork, and probably even after hard study I shall find them too deep for me. Sterling's brilliant, powerful and fine-spirited essay gives a key to much, yet not all, and in some few cases I cannot but think the key does not fit. His doctrine of his simulacra and of sincerity is to me as yet mysterious.

"There is evidently much truth in it, and as certainly some falsehood; but where ends the truth and begins the falsehood, and from what error of vision springs the latter I vainly seek to fathom. Clear-eyed as he is, he seems to me somewhat one-eyed. His very love of truth leads him into error. When he strikes out a truth original, or at any rate unborrowed, he is apt to strengthen and cherish it, till he pampers it into error, or makes it so mighty, that its own place will not contain it, and it takes possession of the territory of some neighbour truth. . . .

"Love to your party,

"Thine ever,

"W. E. FORSTER."

Forster had not yet got a home for himself, but his lodgings at Bolton were something more than merely comfortable. In an extract from the diary of Barclay Fox, describing a visit which he paid to Bradford, he says: "A coach took me to Bradford a little before nine, and at ten I was seated at breakfast with William, before a blazing fire, in unmingled enjoyment. We did talk a little, that's certain—much about the past, more about the future. We drove to meeting in the afternoon, and it was worth attending, if only to meet the kindly face and kindly grasp of Benjamin Seebohm. In the evening one of William's Bradford acquaintances, young Horsfall, looked in, and chatted about Hungary and other foreign parts. . . . His, William's, business, is just now extremely flourishing, and his bachelor establishment is the very ideal of a snuggery. . . . Spent the day quietly with William, riding together to Milner Fields, the place he is tempted to take as a residence. I discouraged it. The house is a tempting old hall, enough to set off the imagination; but it will require much repairing and fitting up. It is five miles from Bradford, and the road is very bad."

It was not at Milner Fields, but in another part of the district that he eventually set up a home of his own; but, in the mean time, he made his little bachelor establishment the centre of attraction, not only to his own relatives and

friends who delighted in availing themselves of any opportunity of visiting him, but to his acquaintances around Bradford, and to others, whose only claim upon his friendship consisted in their helplessness. The children of the Bolton infant school, for example, shared in his hospitality, and he was never happier than when entertaining those who were in his employment, and doing what he could to make them feel thoroughly at home in the presence of their master.

To his old friend Miss Elizabeth Pease, now Mrs. Nicholl, who had been his fellow-worker in the anti-slavery cause at Darlington, he writes as follows :—

"Bradford, Yorkshire, 11 mo., 3, 1842.

"My dear Mrs. Sec.,

"Well, it is not for want of thanks to thee for thy letter that I have been so long in answering it, still less for want of loving remembrance of the days when we used to agitate together, when we wielded turn by turn the thunderbolt of the 'South Durham British India Society,' and made the Company and the board of control, and indeed all manner of control whatever, quake before our wrath. I have been intending to answer thy epistle ever since I received it, but the fact is, in the mean time, I have been to the end of Cornwall, and have been very busy, woolly, and stuffy, and in short have been, and am still, a good-

for-nothing, lazy, unprofitable youth. However, I am really much obliged to thee for thinking of me, and am measurably obliged to thee for thy parcel of firebrands, though, heretic as I am, I confess as yet I have been satiated with their title-pages. Truth to say, my days of agitation are, I fear, nigh over. I begin to have grave doubts as to the prudence and rightness of the system, and no doubts at all as to the irksomeness of the work. I think I can see thy looks of glancing wrath at my mention of my doubtings. How thou wilt toss up thy head in contemptuous scorn. 'He have scruples indeed; he has not the wherewithal to found a scruple on! A conscience is a desideratum with him—the selfish, time-serving, ease-loving, Baal-bowing, bale of wool that he is! Well, I always thought he would fall away; he never held fast to the first principles of truth and justice; he always had a touch of expediency, of the old Aldermanbury leaven about him. Would that I were near him to thrash him well with a garrison cat-o'-nine tails!' Would that thou wert, too. I should uncommonly like a long talk with thee in thy sanctum, on all and everybody, on Thompson especially. When does he start for India? What is his object? For how long does he go? Does his wife go with him? Does Brown go with him? Do tell him in thy next letter how glad I should be of a visit from him before he leaves. I would write to him, had I the remotest

conception where he was. There is one fact in thy letter which gives me unmixed pleasure, and that is thy own return to health, and that not only on thy own account, but for sake of the cause; for, lazy though I am myself, it gives me unfeigned pleasure to see other folk slaving themselves, especially when their slaving turns to such full account as thine does. However lest thou should think me worse than I am, I must say I am every day more and more struck with a conviction of the fearful state of the masses of our own population, their misery and degradation, and more and more impressed with the necessity that some great effort must be made by those above them to help them. What that effort should be is quite another question; but I do feel as if, could I believe in any scheme for their aid, I could even give up something for such a cause as that. Hast thou read any of Carlyle's works—not Carlile, the infidel, but Thomas Carlyle, decidedly, to my thinking, the highest, or rather the deepest mind of the age? He has all Garrison's earnestness, sincerity, and energy, nearly all his one-sidedness, and ten thousand times his depth of intellect. If thou hast not read his Chartism, begin it at once, with which counsel, and very kind remembrance to thy father and mother, I end this rambling scrawl.

"Thine faithfully,

"W. E. Forster."

In 1844, his father was upon one of his mission journeys on the Continent, and Forster writes to him, inquiring after his fortunes, telling him that trade continues very brisk, and begging him, when at Lyons, to look out for patterns of silks, satins, and worsteds. But he was even then beginning to devote his spare time and thought to those political questions which, for the first few years of his residence in Bradford, he had been compelled to lay aside.

"The country gentry," he writes to his father, March 3rd, 1844, "are getting up anti-league meetings all the kingdom over. There was a large one at York last week, and nearly £5000 subscribed. All of our manufacturers, John Rand and John Horsfall made speeches. These meetings, and the improvement in trade, will give Sir Robert an excuse for doing nothing, and fling back the abolition of the corn laws a year or two; but come it must, in the end. What the ministers intend doing with Dan O'Connell is a great puzzle. I think if they meant to punish him, they would have done it at once. Now, after he has been so rapturously received in England, both in the House and out of it, it is very difficult."

The business continued to prosper, thanks to the industry and energy of the young partners, and though they still had their seasons of anxiety, they began to feel the ground secure under their feet. The kindness of Forster's relatives was great

and continuous. In 1844, he tells how his uncles Josiah and Robert Forster had lent him a thousand pounds, and thus enabled him and his partner to enlarge their establishment; and in the same year, he announces that his Uncle Buxton has given him a horse, "and a very good one too," in place of one which had not proved so satisfactory.

Public work in Bradford began to fall to his lot. He was placed upon committees of various kinds, and threw himself eagerly into political and social work. Those were hard days for the working classes, and "the condition of England question" was forcing itself upon the minds of all thoughtful men. Forster interested himself deeply in it, and began to weigh many problems for the bettering of the condition of those around him. His inquiring mind led him to seek enlightenment wherever it was to be found; and it was not unnatural that one so full of enthusiasm and so resolute in seeking to probe the sores of society to their very root, should find himself drawn into sympathetic contact with many of the men who, in their abhorrence of the acknowledged evils of society, were seeking to reconstruct our social system from the foundation upwards. Robert Owen, the socialist, and Thomas Cooper, the chartist, were among those whose acquaintance he formed, and whose opinions he mastered with avidity. In local political affairs also, he now began to take an active and prominent part. The people of Bradford soon recognized the

strength and earnestness of his views upon many of the questions of the day, as well as the vigour with which he sought to carry those views into effect. In an interesting paper on his early days in Bradford,* there is a reference to the part he played at that time in the political strife of the town. "When the election came, he threw his energy into it, and one day headed a troop of rough Irishmen and Chartists, in an expedition to release some Liberal voters locked up by the Tories in an upper room of a public-house, to keep them from voting. No wonder if the new-comer, towering head and shoulders conspicuously above the rabble around him, came in for his share of remark, earning the passing encomium of 'the devil's ramrod' from the people; whilst his more old-fashioned and cautious friends shook their heads, and doubted whether the young politician might not be too much of a Chartist for them, especially as it was reported that he had declared himself in favour of universal suffrage."

The wise and prudent among the Bradford people were at that time apt to regard with reprobation what they deemed the extravagance of his opinions; but among the working classes he soon made himself a power. They felt, not merely what all who knew him felt, the freshness and originality of his mind, but the sincerity of his

* "Mr. W. E. Forster's Early Career." By F. Seebohm, *Contemporary Review*, September, 1866.

sympathy with them in the hard fight which they had to wage with the stern realities of life; and they began to look upon him as one who was destined to become their leader and their teacher.

Yet even among the working classes there were some who were not prepared to go so far as he went. His tried friend and partner, Mr. Fison, recalling his first political speech from the hustings in front of the Court House at Bradford, tells how two men in the crowd were overheard discussing him whilst he was speaking.

"Who is he?" asked one.

"Dost a not know? It's Long Forster."

"Ay! he's a rare talker. I always tho't he were unsensible."

That speech of Forster's, however, made a deep and abiding impression upon Mr. Fison, who felt convinced from that time that his business associate was destined to achieve a place of his own in the political world.

To Barclay Fox.

"Bradford, Yorkshire, November 6th, 1844.

"Dear Barclay,

"Thanks for thy last note, which followed me to Grasmere, where I spent a few most enjoyable days with Uncle Charles and party, barring an attack of tic, which did not much matter when I had Aunt C. and three young ladies

to nurse me; but, now that I have Race [his groom] in their place, is troublesome.

"I went over on Saturday to consult the cold-water doctor at Ilkley, but his mode of curing is too long, and besides, very unpleasant—not the treatment—but the living at a large hotel, with a score or two of folk who have nothing on earth to do but talk or think about their own health or yours. I should die of hyp. in a week. As it is, I came back, fancying all manner of things the matter with me. It is most unhealthy to be constantly examining one's self, either mind, soul, or body. I am writing at the counting-house, and trade is so atrociously flat that it infects my note. I begin to fear that I shall lose money this half year,—the idea of which is disgusting; and what with that and the tic, I feel very philosophical and humble-thoughted.

"My dear mother has been but very poorly; but is better. Write as soon as thou canst.

"With dear love to thy wife,

"Thine ever,

"W. E. FORSTER."

To MR. *and* MRS. BARCLAY FOX.

"Bradford, Sunday evening,

"November 17th, 1844.

"DEAR FRIENDS,

"It is in me this evening to send you a joint epistle. I never passed a more quiet fortnight

—with one exception all my evenings, and at this season they are long, have been spent alone in my own room. My room really is very snug, about as snug as it can be, and altogether I find charms in my own society beyond what I have hitherto experienced. I hope to persevere through winter in this mode of life, but I cannot get on without letters, as sympathy of some sort I must have; so I hope my friends will be merciful to me. . . .

"If you care to know my mental whereabouts you can glance at my last letter to ——. I can have no secrets from either of you; but as a general rule I think doubts are best not talked about. As Dr. Arnold well says, 'talking about them, or even against them, gives them form and substance.' In my case, however, I want to give them form, it was their very vagueness that bewildered me—the fiend eluded my grasp. I think I may venture to say, and that I hope with some thankfulness, that the cloud is cleaving from before me.

"Well, I have been writing as usual all about myself, and yet I do think of you very much."

To Mrs. Charles Fox.

"Bolton, 1st day evening, December, 1844.

"My dear Aunt,

"This evening I have come to the end of Dr. Arnold's life, and the most lovely yet touching account of his death has so vividly recalled this day five weeks when Uncle Charles read it to us

at Grasmere, and this with all those most happy days I spent with you, that I feel as if I must talk to thee as far as in my paper lies.

"I have been slow in getting through Dr. A., for I wished to feel every word as I went on. I think I never met with a book at once so pleasant and so profitable. His noble, brave, loving heart, so earnest, yet so humble, so zealous for truth, so charitable to error; his life of constant work, 'unhasting yet unresting' (his very pleasure and recreation, labour); his intellect at once so deep and so comprehensive, the contemplation of this rare union of the eye to see, the hand to act, with the heart to feel, and above all the will to direct, is at once both humbling and inspiring. It shows me the use and strength of that which I have, but, alas! makes me bitterly feel that which I have not.

"I know of only two other men, of late years at least, and men of thought rather than of action, who thus worked out their lives 'ohne hast, ohne rast'—Jeremy Bentham and Goethe. What a trio, a faithful portraiture of these three; their agreements and contrasts would include almost all the phases of at least the European mind. They are fair preachers and representations of the three contending gospels of Expediency, Art, and Christianity.

"I am now studying Goethe with the object of getting a clear idea of the man, which as yet I confess I have not; but so far as I can see, I can

hardly imagine a more striking illustration of the power of Christianity to soften and ennoble—of the grace of God as contrasted with the graces of humanity—than the comparison of Goethe with such an one as Arnold. . . .

"Do tell me in truth and honesty whether thou dost not find these long egotistical written soliloquies of mine tiresome.

"Thy very loving,

"W. E. FORSTER."

In 1845 his father went upon a second religious mission to America, and Forster went to Liverpool to see him start—not without some hope that he might be able to dissuade him from his self-appointed task.

To his Mother.

"Bradford, Yorkshire, 24th, 8th mo., 1845.

". . . I was most anxiously on the look out for any possible chance of escape from the time when I reached him; but I was quickly convinced there was no chance, and before he left, his own feeling that it was right for him to go was so clear that it seemed as though all that could be done was to have faith and trust that he thought right.

"He called Mary Waterhouse in to tell Friends through her that he felt that peace and quiet in going which he could not but believe was not from himself. The same he said to me more than once

in very few words, and these in much brokenness, but with so much feeling that I never shall forget them. He told me to tell thee that he had written thee all that words could say, but words could say little of what he felt. . . . All the Friends seemed to look upon my father as the one first to be attended to, which was some comfort. The friends of the passengers left the ship about two, and in about half an hour she steamed off—the sun breaking out so as to let them come on deck. My father had put on his cap and long dressing-gown, and with his noble, feeling countenance was much the most conspicuous person on deck. He told me that I had been a very great comfort to him yesterday, which in some measure repaid me for my great disappointment in not getting to him before.

"I long to hear from thee.

"Thy very affectionate son,

"W. E. FORSTER."

The affection which he had borne to his parents was diminished in no degree by the engrossing cares of business life, and his compulsory separation from them. During the journeys of his father on the Continent of Europe and in the United States, he visited his mother whenever he found an opportunity of doing so, corresponded with her constantly, and delighted in using the means he now possessed for the purpose of adding to the comforts by which she was surrounded. It was about this period in

his life that he made the acquaintance of a gentleman still resident in Yorkshire, who in giving his reminiscences of him at that time says, "My record is worthless for a biographer. It is made up of the little acts of kindness and of love which are the best portions of a good man's life;" and he goes on to tell how Forster, the busy man of commerce, with his mind full either of business affairs or of projects for public work, yet found time to visit regularly a house where poverty was an abiding guest, and how the visits became more frequent and the kindness grew as sickness and sorrows made poverty harder to bear. All this remained true of him to his latest days; but there is perhaps no period of a man's life when he is more apt to forget the duty of feeling and showing sympathy with others than at the time when he first has to bear the full brunt of a business man's struggle with the world.

CHAPTER VI.

THE IRISH FAMINE.

It was Forster's good fortune, whilst he was pursuing the business of a wool-stapler in the West Riding, to make the acquaintance of some men who at the time held a high position in the intellectual world. He had formed an acquaintance with John Sterling through their common friendship with the Fox family; through Sterling he became acquainted with Frederick Denison Maurice, and at a somewhat later period with Carlyle. Evidence has already been given in his letters of the strong attraction which Carlyle's genius and teaching had for him. He differed with him in his views upon many questions, he disliked the peculiar characteristics of his style, he resented his autocratic manner of pronouncing judgment upon the questions with which he dealt; but far outweighing all the reasons for an antipathy towards the illustrious writer, were those which drew Forster into sympathy with him. After Carlyle's death, Forster spoke of him as having been "the greatest modifying force of this

century," and it may well be doubted whether upon any public man of his time the author of "Sartor Resartus" had a greater influence than that which he undoubtedly exercised over Mr. Forster.

At the close of 1845 he paid his first visit to Carlyle, who had pledged himself to become his guest at the earliest opportunity. This visit was noticeable because it was the means of bringing Forster into personal relations with a man for whom he formed a warm friendship, and with whom for the rest of his life he continued to maintain the kindliest relations. This was Thomas Cooper, the Chartist, whose "Prison Rhyme" had won the admiration of Carlyle, and led him to mention his name to Forster.

Cooper first met Forster at a breakfast given by the latter in London in May, 1846. The Rev. F. D. Maurice, and Mr. Charles Buxton, Forster's cousin, were also present at the party; and it resulted in an invitation being given to Cooper to go to Yorkshire on a visit to the young manufacturer.

"I visited him there," says Mr. Cooper, "several times in 1846, by his pressing invitation. He drove me up the picturesque valley of the Wharfe, and showed me the sights of the district, Bolton Abbey, Gordale Scar, Malham Cove, Ingleborough, and Great Whernside. We passed the greater part of the time, however, in conversa-

tion. I was then forty-one years old, and he was but eight and twenty; yet I found that he had read a great deal and thought a great deal, and had a far wider knowledge of human life, and a much keener insight into human character, than I had possessed at his age. He started no light topics for conversation. He had none of the frothiness which is so often wearisome in the talk of young men in what is called 'highly respectable society.'" Scorning affectation and patronage, he talked with the recently liberated Chartist prisoner on the perfect level of man with man, and with the wise intent of learning all he could, especially of the working classes, from the first educated man who had thrown himself into the struggle for the rights and liberties of the poor. "As I touched sometimes on my own early life battle, he would, with a manly yet tender sympathy, which I cannot easily describe, contrast it with his own happy boyhood in the paternal home at Bradpole, in Dorset, and his delightful visits to the flower-clad Earlham, near Norwich, the beautiful seat of Joseph John Gurney, for whom he had great reverence. A reverence which was crowned with enthusiastic admiration, he evidently felt for his illustrious friend Elizabeth Fry. The change in his face was radiant when he described her stately form, the sweetness and thrilling power of her voice, and the vastness of influence she had over every human being with whom she spoke, from

the King of Prussia to the vilest criminals in Newgate. By his very lineage and blood, it was natural that my friend's thoughts should often diverge into the sorrowful theme of negro slavery. He talked with a force and vigour unusual even with him when he spoke of that sum of all villainies. His description of the excitement and suffering which the struggle to end it cost his philanthropic uncle, Sir Fowell Buxton, and the cruel and shamefully mercenary opposition that noble and generous champion of the poor blacks had to encounter in the House of Commons, recurs to my memory after all these years. Still more indelibly are impressed on my memory his words of commiseration for suffering Ireland, and the frequency, tenderness, and strength of feeling with which he expressed his convictions. Education for the people was another very frequent theme in these early conversations. 'If I had to take a part in the administration of affairs in this country,' he would say, again and again, 'I would strive to accomplish two great purposes—to give relief, and lasting relief, to poor Ireland; and to get the children of the working classes out of the gutter, by educating them.'"

It was very soon after the conversation in which Forster used these words to Mr. Cooper, that an opportunity was afforded him of rendering signal service to the country with whose people he had so long felt an earnest sympathy, and with

which, in future days, his public career was to be so intimately associated. In the summer of 1846, the state of things in Ireland, arising from the failure of the potato crop, became so serious, as to arrest the attention of all parties in England. There is no need to repeat here, even briefly, the history of the great famine. Everybody now knows how, owing to the loss of that which was their staple article of food, vast multitudes of the people of Ireland were reduced to a state which was almost literally one of starvation.

The story of the ghastly mortality of 1846 and 1847, and of all the ills, social and political, which have followed it, may almost be said to be written in blood in our national annals. Hardly a darker page is to be found in the history of the United Kingdom; yet it is consoling to know that, from the first moment at which the attention of the people of Great Britain was called to the actual condition of the starving peasantry of Ireland, the warmest sympathies were awakened on their behalf on this side of St. George's Channel.

The Society of Friends, always foremost in promoting works of practical benevolence, was the very earliest in taking the field for the purpose of combating "the hunger." A committee was formed in London, in the summer of 1846, consisting of members of the society. Funds were subscribed with characteristic liberality, and trusted agents were sent to Ireland to administer the relief which

the English Quakers had provided for the suffering Irish Catholics. The chief of these agents was William Forster, who had shown his zeal in the service of his Master in so many fields, and who still had no higher ambition than that of devoting himself to the cause of the poor and the afflicted.

His mission in Ireland, now of historic fame, began in November, 1846. But he was not the first in the field in the work of inquiry and of relief. He was preceded in that work in the month of September by his son. It was the period of the year at which William Edward Forster was in the habit of taking his annual holiday. His heart had been moved to its innermost depths by the story of the suffering poor, as it was recorded in the daily press, and he resolved to visit Ireland for himself, in part to administer relief, but chiefly to investigate the facts regarding the famine on the spot, in order that he might stimulate public benevolence at home.

No complete record of this his first journey to Ireland remains; but his letters to his father and his friend Barclay Fox supply a sufficiently full account of his experiences. He went to Ireland by way of Dublin, where there were many members of the Society of Friends who were familiar with his name, and from whom he received a warm welcome.

He did not tarry in Dublin, however, but went at once to the heart of the famine-stricken district.

To his Father.

"Cahirciveen, September 20th, 1846.

"MY DEAR FATHER,

"Here I am, in a small wretched town, with the exception perhaps of Dingle, the most westerly town in Europe.

"I had yesterday a tough walk. I took a car to a few miles from Killarney, and then climbed across the shoulder of Carran Tual, the highest mountain in Ireland, which I should have scaled had the fog permitted, and after a toilsome climb of about *twenty* miles, reached a wayside inn, where I stayed till ten, when I was taken up by the one-horse mail-car, which brought me in here about 1.30. The beds of this poor inn were all engaged, but they fitted up a sofa very fairly, and, barring that the door would not shut, and a dog would implore, I managed very fairly.

"The famine is appalling—in the mouths of all persons—quite quelling the natural vivacity of the people. The poor are so entirely dependent on their small holdings, for which they pay (have, in fact, already paid) in labour, whether crop sound or rotten, that with the utmost exertions of the Government and landowners, starvation must, I fear, ensue.

"The failure last year was nothing compared with this, either in degree or extent. So far as I can learn from landowners, farmers, and labourers,

the proportion of sound potatoes is not more than one-tenth. Last year in this district the disease was more than compensated by the unusually large produce; but now they are actually gone in the ground, and those who have bought pigs have not even rotten ones enough to feed them.

"I went into several wretched cabins, where the poor people were bringing in with woe-begone look their scanty, blighted crop. The poor are terribly frightened, especially in districts where there are no neighbouring gentry to encourage and sustain them. They see before them death or robbery.

"I will give an instance in my mountain guide yesterday, whom I picked by chance out of a field —a noble-looking fellow, with a fine forehead, aquiline nose, and stately gait, but with almost no clothes, bare legged—his thighs staring through his tattered corduroys—no shirt. His hire was 6*d.* per day, with diet, paying at that rate in labour £5 per annum for his acre of potatoes, which have entirely failed. A wife and *four* small children; the children earning nothing. He said, 'We were starving before, we must die now.' He had been well off, having grazing for *six* cows; but his landlord turned him out, to make the small holdings into votes against repeal. The man, too, who committed this fearful sin, for such it is, though common enough hereaway, ruining a poor man for life for a paltry political purpose, was a Mac-

gillicuddy, one of the old Irish families, who have been masters of the country for many centuries. Yet this poor fellow spoke of him with no bitterness, but merely gave me his story as reason why he was no repealer. 'Repeal had made him worse than before.' Pointing to the sheep on the hills, 'We shall soon be forced to steal them for the children;' and yet the man had an honest heart. I had all my money about me, a gold watch-chain, and gold spectacles. He must have thought me a mine of riches; and yet I felt myself perfectly safe with him and his great shillelagh amid the cliffs, far from any cabin. He asked me eagerly for tobacco; with that, he could do without his breakfast till evening. 'I get so vexed for want of tobacco, that I beat the poor children sometimes.' This admission proved, however, the strength of his natural affection.

"Yesterday they had here their barony meeting. O'Connell, who owns all the land around, and the Knight of Kerry present, and the owner and occupier agreed to undertake public works for this year, under the new Act, to the amount of twenty thousand pounds—one thousand pounds only under the Poor Law valuation of the whole rental. This sum, to be advanced by Government, appears an immense sum for works for the purpose of employment rather than use; but, nevertheless, what will it be for a population of 28,000—almost their sole support for eight months?

Taking seven thousand heads of families at 8*d.* a day, this is £200 a day, and would soon go.

"The distress will be greatest about next March, when, unless Government take other and more vigorous measures, great loss of life must ensue. Surely there will be a national English subscription; and it is a case in which Friends ought to act with vigour, and consider what they can do, and how they can induce others to co-operate. Couldst thou not call a meeting of sufferings at once, to appoint a committee for considering what steps should be taken? If this famine should oblige Friends to take up the condition of the Irish poor, it would be well. At best the whole of this people are slaves to starvation and misery, and this year will be a long middle passage.

"Do read these disjointed notes, which I write as I remember what I have seen and heard, to Uncle Joseph, and think what can be done.

"It is difficult to ascertain the exact amount of wages; the landowners making the best, and the farmers and peasantry the worst; but, so far as I can make out, it averages from 8*d.* to 10*d.* per day with diet, in the spring and autumn quarters; and 4*d.* to 6*d.* per day during the rest of the year. Without diet, which is two meals of either potatoes or Indian meal, 2*d.* or 4*d.* more. Owing to the failure of the crop, the farmers are giving up diet here. The public works will probably start

this year at 8*d.* without diet. Last year they were 10*d.* If they pay in money, as proposed, instead of Indian meal, at wholesale price, this will not keep the people alive.

"From Dublin to Newcastle and Limerick, I travelled with a highly intelligent gentleman, Captain Kennedy, late secretary of the Devon Company, now agent for Lord Devon's large estates, and manager of the public works for that district. He gave me a great deal of information, and especially interested me by relating what he had done on his own estate in Donegal, where he had raised four hundred families from misery to comparative comfort by locating them on his waste lands, not without great trouble at first, and some personal danger. This was doing, on a small scale, what Government ought now to compel on a large.

"Limerick was full of soldiers, and so was Rathkeale, a small town on this side; but, curiously, in the only places in which I saw the red coat, I observed large placards in booksellers shops, 'Ejectment processes, etc., furnished, at the shortest possible notice.'

"Last evening and to-day I have been in company with a man of the name of O'Sullivan, agent of a large property hereaway, held by a Leicestershire gentleman of the name of ——, and a most courteous communicative man, evidently disposed to do what he can. —— owns in fee, or as middle man, immense tracts hereaway, and

all the swarming collection of cabins, that caricature of a town, called Cahirciveen. From all I can learn or see, he is far from being a cruel or grasping landlord; but his people are badly off, owing to his easy kindness in allowing an unlimited number of squatters. This, though an injury to the farmer occupiers, is so plainly to his own disadvantage, that it by no means deserves the attack of the *Times*, though certainly his property requires more attention. That these small holdings are not for his own interest is plain enough, from the fact that the poor rates and taxes for public works, and for rents under £5 per annum, are chargeable on the landlords only. The rector of Cahirciveen has not been there for ten years, and gave last year £2 to the relief fund, receiving from the parish £600 per annum. O'Sullivan's rector receives £300, and has given nothing, and never been near his parish. The Irish Church can't stand this.

"I have come this afternoon *eight* miles, about half way to Derrynane, to a clean comfortable wayside inn, Waterville. From Derrynane I intend to go up to Galway, through the most wretched districts I can hear of, determined to learn what I can, though it is a poor journey of pleasure.

"The scenery is magnificent, but to-day soaking wet. . . . With dearest love to my mother,

"Thy very affectionate son,

"W. E. FORSTER.

"They do not even offer me potatoes *at the inn*."

"Tarbert, September 27th, 1846.

"My dear Father,

"I went on to Derrynane on second day morning. I found 'the Liberator,' as his family, friends, and all folks hereaway call him, on his mountains with his hounds hunting, which means in this country walking from one height to another, to see the hunt. He received me with the greatest courtesy and kindness, and spoke with the greatest respect and love of my uncle.

"There was nobody with him but huntsmen, a whole troop of ragged gossoons, and one young fellow, some relation, and his son-in-law, Charles O'Connell, late member for Kerry, a tall, fine, but uncommon fierce-looking fellow.

"I hope my mother will excuse my staying with him through the day, though it was a hunt; but it was worth much to see a man who, whatever else he is, without doubt has been for long the leader of a nation, and king of the hearts of a people. We breakfasted on the hills, huntsmen and all—green tea, black tea, porter, brandy, punch, milk, great heaps of meat. He was looking better than I expected, certainly much broken from the last year or so, but yet an uncommon fine fellow for his age, seventy-one; striding up the steep craggy mountain, disdaining any help.

He joined heartily in the sport, which is almost his only recreation, and every now and then told me a good story of his past life; but he struck me

as looking low and overweighted, and, from several incidental expressions he made use of, I do believe he deeply feels the distress of the people. We went home to dinner about six. His house is a large, ugly, irregular building, in a splendid situation, a fine wooded glen between wild rocky mountains, at the end of a deep creek of the ocean, which, in this south-west corner of the kingdom, is uncommonly grand.

"I think I never saw a place so completely secluded—solitude almost to desolation. The house is like my mother's description of Irish life—some fine rooms, others wretched; quite a magnificent dining and drawing-room, each thirty-three feet long. We sat down to dinner a large party, but all his own family, with the exception of Dr. Weyland, the Catholic Bishop of Bombay, brother of the Poor Law Commissioner, lately returned, a pleasant, communicative, gentlemanly man, as I suppose most priests of education are.

"O'Connell sat at the top of the table, and his son Maurice, the member for Tralee, at the bottom, a kind, good-natured fellow, with a good deal of humour and plain sense; but not much agitation in him, I should think. There were nine of his twenty-nine grandchildren in the house, and it was very pleasant to see them clustering about their grandpapa, his fondness for them, and their reverential love. There were five girls, all under fourteen; three of them sweet-looking creatures,

who declared their determination to be nuns. Soon after dinner we went upstairs, he not accompanying us, but going to his library, as is his custom.

"The morning of the next day I spent in reading, writing, and walking about the grounds with the bishop and two of O'Connell's daughters. At dinner, we lost the Poor Law man; and had an accession of half a dozen priests. We had a bright talk after dinner, about the pope and slavery, and Dan's treatment at the nigger meeting, and two or three somewhat tender subjects, which, however, we piloted well through. When I went up to coffee, I took leave of him, thanking him heartily for his kindness, and for the pleasure my visit had given me.

"'I am very much obliged to you,' he replied, with all the courtesy of a gentleman of the old school, which, indeed, is the tone of his bearing in his own house. I left next morning, before seeing him, highly gratified with my stay.

"I do not believe the man to be in the least conscious to himself of insincerity. The loving bond between himself and his family, and dependents, almost proves his heart to be too large for that. I have made a great deal of inquiry in all quarters respecting his tenantry, and I am convinced that the impression made by the reports in the *Times* is most unfair and untrue. I should say he is decidedly the best landlord in his district,

but owing to his having allowed ejected tenants from other properties to squat on his estate at nominal rents, there are, of course, some wretched cabins. But I found the contrast great between his villages and the wretched places I passed through yesterday, in my road to Tralee, miserable beyond the power of description.

"I asked O'Connell fully his views about the distress. He is opposed to a private subscription, at present, at least, as taking the responsibility from Government. His great fear is, not the want of employment—that, he thinks, the public works will provide—but actual scarcity of food, insufficiency of Indian meal; and he thinks Government ought to pay in meal, in order to secure a supply at wholesale prices. This was the conclusion I had previously come to; without it, 8*d.* or 10*d.* a day will not keep large families alive, and the families here are something fearful. The farmers frequently marry their daughters at twelve or thirteen, for fear of accidents, and the peasants marry nearly as soon. Girls are mothers generally at sixteen. Charles O'Connell told me of a tenant of his who had two children, not twins, before she was sixteen. On the other hand, the standard of chastity is far higher than with us, and illegitimate children rare. I am now at Limerick, having come up the Channel by steamer from Tarbert. I go to Galway to-morrow, but if the weather—which has turned very cold and stormy—does not

improve, I shall give up, jaunt to Conemara, and return straight from thence to Dublin.

"I am more than ever convinced that Friends ought to take up the state of this people, as a society, and strive to bring their weight, which in such a case as this would be great, to bear upon the Government.

"Your very affectionate son,

"W. E. FORSTER."

"Galway, September 28th, 1846.

"MY DEAR FATHER,

"I have reached here this morning, to this most foreign-looking, but for Ireland not very poor, town; and heartily glad I am for your letter. From Limerick here, I came through a better and more improved country, bearing the trace of painstaking landlords; some of the land very poor rocky limestone, but I often find the people and condition in inverse proportion to the value of the land. There is a general impression that rents will not be paid this year. One of the largest agents' firms in Dublin told me that they were accepting in great fear bills anticipatory of this year's rents. Very many mortgages will be foreclosed, and properties change hands this year. This will eventually do good, supplanting the needy landlords by capitalists. In fact, this year must be a crisis for Ireland. The whole of this year's income will be mortgaged to Government. I have heard of one

barony rated to the Poor Law at £5000, in which presentments have been made for £17,000. The landlords are greatly frightened, as they well may be, but on the whole I think they are trying to do their duty. A great many of the potato grounds are held direct of the landlord. Wages, in the country I passed through to-day appear to be 10*d.* —above the average. In the west of Kerry, I could get any number at 6*d.* to 8*d.* With all this misery, I pass everywhere land which might quickly be reclaimed, to the great profit both of owner and occupier; it is most provoking to see so much money spent on roads with this great want. The grass roads here are far better than our Yorkshire roads.

"As to the temperance pledge, I find many men still keeping it, but the general opinion is, that a large proportion have broke. The priest at Derrynane, Father Welsh (who with one of his companions was a teetotaller, the other priests, bishop included, taking their wine and punch very comfortable-like), told me that he was sorry to say they were sadly losing numbers. Faction fights, I found, were still common about Killarney.

"The price of food is difficult to ascertain. I should not like to change places with the speculators who are making immense profits by the rise in Indian meal.

"The priests like the National Colleges, getting their own way with them. I found them

all over the wildest parts of Kerry, the children going every day, and paying one shilling a quarter. The landlords here are really to be felt for; the good suffering for the bad. Captain Kennedy told me that he had provided for the supplies of his tenantry until the new Act stepped in and took his funds for the whole district. It is an awful crisis, the greatest possible number living on the lowest possible product; and that product now universally failing, starving the people, and ruining the landlords, who will now reap the fruits of their thoughtlessness.

"I find a good large inn here, the landlord very attentive, owing to a recommendation from my friend Burke, whom I met at Derry.

"To-morrow I go on to Westport by Connemara.

"Your very affectionate son,

"W. E. FORSTER.

"I have only met with two tipsy men since I came to Ireland, one a poor beggar, perhaps a fool, instead of drunk, another a small landowner, now getting into a true Galway passion at the next table. I have just learnt that Indian meal has risen in this town, within the last three weeks, from £10 to £14 per ton."

The friends whom he met in Dublin during this first journey of his proved staunch and true, and remained his friends for the rest of his life.

There is an amusing letter of his, written during the course of his journey, asking for a remittance of money from one of his new-found acquaintances at Dublin.

"My dear sir," he says, with characteristic bluntness, "in the first place, may I trouble you to lend me £20?" Then he adds, "I find nothing but English in this hotel—sober, calculating fellows (how I hate them!); but the hearing of their ugly voices has recalled me to my calculating powers, and on taking stock, I find that without a fresh supply at Galway, I may as well make up my mind to remain at Connemara."

The £20 was duly sent, and Forster was relieved from his momentary embarrassment. He returned to England at the beginning of October. The impression made upon him in Ireland had been very deep; and he had hardly returned before he set to work to stimulate the movement for the relief of the sufferers from the famine among the English Friends.

"I had hard work enough in London," he writes to one of his Dublin friends, "especially the first day or two. On arriving at Tottenham, I found the clothing scheme thoroughly afloat, my aunts [the Miss Forsters] having sent out five thousand circulars. But nothing would please the women but they must meet me; so I was pitched into a committee of some forty, to tell my own story, and I was so bound to my business that I

overlooked all ideas of absurdity, and should have walked into a company of angels or fiends with equal *sang froid*. But on reflection it does amuse. Only think of poor self swapped down in the midst of forty Quakeresses of all varieties of age, size, and looks; and then baited for a brace of hours by questions on such subjects! A lecture on inexpressibles and unmentionables! And one or two notable old ladies craving for facts, insisting on knowing what the Irish women *did* wear. At last I lost all patience, and broke out with, 'The fact is, they will soon wear nothing. There; take that!' However, the dear creatures did what I asked them, and agreed to make their movement a national one by adding the names of unfriend ladies to their committee, and we find both clothes and funds flowing in from all quarters.

"Well, then I went to the committee of the British Association, and it did my heart good to meet them. Rothschild, Kinnaird, and some dozen other millionaire city princes meeting every day, and working hard. A far greater sacrifice to them than mere gifts of money. Truly the heart of England is touched, and when the 'Saxon hog' does get roused into feeling, he is not such a bad sort of animal after all.

"Next morning my uncle and self saw Lord John, to whom I 'relieved my mind,' as Friends say. What a strange little mortal he is, to be

ruler of a mighty nation, with his dwarf-like form, and long, deep, remarkable head, and icy cold expression, with every now and then a look of fire!

"After that our own committee were summoned to meet me; but enough of my egotistical scrawl, which please burn as soon as read."

Deeply as he was interested in Ireland and the famine, he was not induced to remit his interest in affairs at home, and especially in Bradford. The story of his journey to Ireland quickly became known in Yorkshire circles, and his efforts were warmly appreciated.

"Through some accidental circumstances," he says modestly, writing to his friend Barclay Fox, "I am rather popular just now," and he adds that he is in consequence thinking of delivering a lecture or course of lectures to his neighbours in Bradford. "After much cogitation, I have thought of some such matter as this, 'Lessons to be derived from the study of the History of the English People; an attempt at comparision between past and present condition of our poor, and deductions therefrom of hints for their future help.' Tell me what thou thinkest of that, and also of any books which would assist me in the history of the poor. The state of Ireland is now an awful warning against neglect of the duties of property."

Meanwhile, the efforts which he and others were making for the purpose of arousing public

feeling in England regarding the condition of Ireland bore fruit. His father's journey to the distressed districts, of which a deeply interesting account remains on record, began, as has been said, in November; and in January, William Edward Forster himself returned to Ireland for the purpose of joining his father, and assisting him in his work. He kept a rough diary of his journey.

"1847, *Jan.* 15*th*.—Breakfasted with Uncle Josiah at Tottenham, called on Kingscote, read him my father's extract about clothing; heard from him that Government were helping their subscription. . . . Called then at Wesleyan Mission House, saw Hoole; Beecham and Bunting not in; talked and read to him about clothing, which he took up. A circular for funds to their societies under their consideration, only difference of opinion between giving to national fund and to their own superintendents; probably the last will be passed. He will take into consideration a circular to women about clothing, about which I am to write him. Saw James Forster in omnibus, who seemed warmed by Baptist Noel's sermon, which made his congregation cry, and dragged £1800 out of their pockets; tried to find Baptist Noel about clothing, but could not, and returned to F. and B.'s country house. Saw J. B., and promised to send him information through my aunts. Took mail to Leeds.

"16*th*.—Breakfasted at home; few hours at Bradford. Found Irish Committee sitting; spirited—raised £2000 already; probably will give it to Friends. Got to Liverpool in time for steamer.

"17*th*.—Befogged. Got to Keriten about eleven; breakfasted at Dixon's. Went to Dublin, called at Relief Committee. Dined at Dixon's, young Edward Wakefield there; all full of the meeting of Peers, members, and landholders, in Dublin, held on Thursday, an union of all parties to form an Irish party. Went off by mail, outside.

"18*th*.—Outside mail till five, when reached Castlebar. Until getting within a stage or so of Castlebar, did not see much greater symptoms of distress or begging than usual. The land, too, in tolerable preparation for next year, from Ballinasloe (dark before) till I got near Castlebar; from there to Westport nothing done. Inquired at Castlebar for my father. Heard a good gentleman had been there, but probably now at Westport. Roads most dangerous; almost impassable from the improvements. Stopped several minutes by carts in a cutting. The labourers and small farmers taken off the land for these improvements. Read as I came along, attentively, the account of the Thursday meeting in *Nation* and *Freeman's Journal*. Greatest meeting held since volunteer time. Nearly a thousand peers and gentry; all parties represented by their leaders. Many good permanent measures advocated, but the great cry for Government to

provide food for the people. O'Connell's speech the best he ever made. The distress in the mouths of every one. Coachman said the very rooks that used to live on the potatoes even falling from hunger.

"Found my father waiting for me at Westport; pretty well, but worn up and worn down. Todhunter and George Alexander with him. . . . Wrote a long letter to uncle [his uncle Josiah Forster], urging on Friends consideration whether they should not memorialize Government to effect of private subscriptions not sufficing, and that they must also feed the people. It is plain no private subscriptions can reach the people. Both extent and details worse than I had expected.

"Glad to get to bed. Up three nights; but not a country now to sleep in.

"19*th*.—Hard pressure this morning; so much to do before leaving Westport. The town a collection of beggars; the inn beset by a crowd of gaunt creatures, besieging Lynch, the head of the works, for tickets, a man just above the poor one. Owen Toole, from the Isle of Innisturk, stating there are there 128 families, 70 of them without resource, the rest but a trifle. Ordered him a ton of meal, to be distributed by himself, with Court Guard Officer and priest of Clare Island. Last evening my old friend Welsh, of the police, called on my father, with a terrible account of Bandurra. A warm-hearted man, a Dr. Derkee, of Louisburgh,

called. The people dying, he says, by 10 and 20 a day, carried off by diarrhœa and dysentery for want of food. He says clothing is greatly wanted, and that in that district it could not be pawned. There was truth and real feeling about him; he was as grateful for £5 from my father and £3 from myself to my old friends as though we had saved him from ruin. My father was there on 7th day and mobbed, ordering a ton for distribution. He is going to Clare Island and will make inquiries for us there. My father had yesterday a long talk with Lord Sligo; likes him; heart in his work; rents reduced, they say, from £25,000 to £5000, but gives £50 for every £100 raised at Westport. One of main movers in late Irish meeting. He gives hope that land hereaway will be cultivated. Harbour-master called with bad accounts from Clare Island, also of families dying near by fresh fever for want of food. Left about two in car; father and myself, to sleep at Ask Lodge, country house of a Plunket, brother of the bishop, son of the late Lord Chancellor, about three miles from Leenane. As I left Westport, saw a crowd of starved almost naked women waiting for soup tickets. Truly famine and pestilence walk the land. Found a most hospitable welcome at Ask, but Plunket at his Delphi Lodge, prevented coming by bad sea. Sent his steward with provisions, who tells a tale of horror of Bandurra, population of 700, no resource but public works and a little live stock,

quickly going; meal selling at 3*s.* 6*d.* a stone, so a man with a family, earning 8*d.* per diem at works, may get about a stone of meal for the support of six people for a week. Told with tears in his eyes a story of a poor man selling his new-calved cow, his last resource, to feed his children, with money yet owing from the Board of Works. My father speaks well of the landlords. Not one of the resident landlords he has seen, he says, but works from morning to night for the people; especially well of the clergy; and highly also of the priests. But death from want of food is talked but lightly of by every one; so common, the coroner of Ballinar applied to them for money, not for food, but to enable the people to buy coffins. A wild rough night, but resting quarters. My father's wonder and my own is, not that the people die, but that they live. What have they to live on? Met a poor fellow on the road going to the works, who had had two sheep stolen by his neighbours for food, he having nine children.

"Wrote letter about clothing to Dr. Bunting. Coming to Westport on coach, coachman said when grain was seized men divided fairly. Coracle grain spoilt by laying out under process.

"20*th.*—Good quarters; Plunkets kind. Got to Leenane about eleven. Large number of men looking better than usual under old Joyce. Working at making quay wall, earning 1*s.* to 1*s.* 2*d.* per diem. People on roadside overwhelmed with joy at

sight of loaves. Took boat to Bandurra; terrible misery. Walked up to Plunket at Delphi. . . . Men gaunt skeletons; women in cabins too weak to stand, children crying, women and children almost clotheless; police sergeant and Plunket's steward begging with tears in their eyes; shell-fish all resource. Obliged to send to boat at Leenane for 30*s.* worth of meal. Gave it myself; ordered also a ton from Westport; nominal wages on road 8*d.* to 1*s.* Patience of people wonderful. . . .

"Got to Clifden—dark. Heard confirmed *four* cases of death from starvation, even within last day or two. Woman yesterday pulled into a barn in agony of death; found in morning partly eaten by dogs. Another corpse carried up the streets to bury in wheelbarrow till D'Arcy gave money out of his own pocket for coffin.

21*st.*—After breakfast Dr. Loffield, dispensary surgeon, called on us; spoke of disease and death; said I should find great distress about Kensyle. Went there by car; half-starved horse, police-sergeant, yesterday's acquaintance, taking in man for sheep stealing; overtook men trying for tickets. One case, a man with *three* acres, had had two of potatoes and one of oats. Oats all eaten, potatoes gone. Blake's rent 38*s.*, and 7*s.* for seaweed. Paid nothing; one cow expected to be seized; five in family; good case. Called on Lees, clergyman; fine fellow, working with all his might. Secretary of committee. Went on to committee; only one man

in family employed; court-house like a barn, full of gaunt wretches craving for work; some of the men went to the work in the hope of the lot falling on them. Blake told me no preparation made for next crop. Priest Fitzgerald said twelve cases of death in last ten days; administered last comfort to eighteen within two days. Lees thinks this exaggerated; but knows of seven. Did not ask for assistance; has kept people by private subscriptions; already given £200 or so. Some money on hand; good fellow, but aims too low; his wife—a lady housewife, a noble creature—working like a slave, leaving all things for their kitchen and soup kitchen. Started for Boffin,* hearing of horrible distress; but could not find our boat. Other boat would not go; dark and rough; so engaged it for morning. A poor fellow who carried our bag three miles or more, Lady L. gave *three* quarts of meal to. He seized some of it raw, and said he had had nothing since breakfast yesterday morning. Returned to Lees."

Disjointed and brief as these extracts are, they afford terrible evidence of the state of things with which the Government and its voluntary assistants had to deal in Ireland; whilst the journal also shows the care with which its writer gathered details regarding all the cases brought under his

* When Mr. Forster was on his death-bed, he remembered his visit to Boffin, and hearing that Mr. Tuke was there distributing relief, sent a message to him.

notice. To the last Mr. Forster believed that in order to understand any problem it was essential that the largest possible number of facts bearing upon it should be accumulated. Mere hearsay evidence, however striking, or theory, however plausible, never weighed with him against facts, however trivial those facts might seem to be.

On January 26th, Forster returned to England, leaving his father in the midst of his work. He wrote a narrative of his visit for the use of the Society of Friends, in which he told, in the simplest manner, but with all the more force because of its simplicity, the story of what he had seen. There is no need to go further into the details of that terrible time, but some of his reflections upon the famine and its causes are too characteristic to be entirely omitted. Even at that time there were in England not a few who, when they regarded the state of Ireland, were moved only by a feeling of bitter hostility towards the Irish landlords, and Forster felt constrained to raise his protest against such unfairness. "Those English gentlemen," he wrote, "who, turning a deaf ear to the cry of their fellow-countrymen, strive to shift all the responsibility on to the Irish landlords, would do well to study cases such as this, which are, alas! too numerous. However much the past conduct of Irish landlords may have originated or increased the present distress, it is most certain that, as a class, they are unable to keep their

peasantry alive. Their blood, therefore, will be at the doors of all of us who, being able, are unwilling to help." Yet, whilst he was thus impelled to protest against a spirit which was not only unjust in itself, but inimical to the interests of the suffering Irish, he was not at all disposed to judge lightly the conduct of those landlords who had in any degree failed in their duty. "I am glad," he writes to his friend James Tuke, "thou wrote so plainly about the Marquis of C—— in the *Daily News*. Such landlords ought to be abolished; they are a nuisance on the face of the earth."

The narrative of his visit to Ireland was the first document of national interest which had gone forth under his own name. It is full of that rugged but impressive eloquence of which, in his after career, he became so complete a master. "When we entered a village, our first question was, 'How many deaths?' '*The hunger has been there*,' was everywhere the cry, and involuntarily we found ourselves regarding this *hunger* as we should an epidemic, looking upon starvation as a disease. In fact, as we went along, our wonder was, not that the people died, but that they lived; and I have no doubt whatever that, in any other country, the mortality would have been far greater; that many lives have been prolonged, perhaps saved, by the long apprenticeship to want in which the Irish peasant has been trained, and by that lovely, touching charity which prompts him to share his

scanty meal with his starving neighbour. But the spring of this charity must rapidly be dried up. Like a scourge of locusts *the hunger* daily sweeps over fresh districts, eating up all before it: one class after another is falling into the same abyss of ruin. There is now but little difference between the small farmer and the squatter. We heard in Galway of little tradesmen secretly begging for soup. The priest cannot get his dues, nor the landlord his rent. The highest and the lowest in the land are forced into sympathy by this all-mastering visitation. The misery of Ireland must increase daily, so far as regards her own resources, for daily they become less. To England must she this year look to save the lives of her children; nor will the need for English aid cease this year. It will be long before, even with her utmost efforts, she can recover from this blow, or will be able to support her own population. She must be a grievous burden on our resources in return for long centuries of neglect and oppression.

"I trust I shall be excused if I express my earnest desire that the members of our society may not consider that their duty to Ireland is fulfilled by their effort to meet this present necessity. Its general and permanent condition is a subject in itself almost too dreadful to contemplate. Famine is there no new cry. It is a periodical disease. Every year there are districts where prevails somewhat of that misery which now rules the land.

Over a large portion of its population all the great purposes of existence are forgotten in a struggle with death.

"I would not now discuss the causes of this condition, in order to attempt to apportion blame to its authors; but of this one fact there can be no question, that the result of our social system is that vast numbers of our fellow-countrymen, the peasantry of one of the richest nations the world ever knew, have not leave to live. Surely such a social result as this is not only a national misfortune, but a national sin, crying loudly to every Christian citizen to do his utmost to remove it. No one of us can have a right to enjoy either riches or repose until, to the extent of his ability, he tries to wash himself of all share in the guilt of this fearful inequality, which will be a blot in the history of our country and make her a byword among the nations."

Such were Forster's words in 1847. No one can read them without feeling that they came straight from the heart; and those who knew him best can bear testimony to the fact that the impression made upon his mind in that time of tragic anguish was never effaced; was, indeed, hardly ever weakened. Three-and-thirty years afterwards he went to Ireland as Chief Secretary, strong in the determination, which he had never during all that long interval of time relinquished, that he at least would do his best to the utmost extent of his

ability to wash himself of all share in the guilt which the condition of that country had cast upon England.

His active exertions on behalf of the Irish by no means ceased when he returned to his business at Bradford. Trade was in a deplorably depressed condition, and there were grave fears of a panic among business men. It was no light sacrifice which the young manufacturer made in giving up so much of his time and his energies to public affairs; but there was work to be done which he felt himself able to do, and which the necessities of his fellow-creatures demanded, and he was still ready to do his best in the good cause.

Writing to Mr. Thomas Cooper, February 28th, 1847, he says:—

"Now I want you to be so very kind as to execute if you can, without real inconvenience, a small commission for me. Did you read Lord Radnor's protest against the Government measure for Irish relief? It was such a complete exposition of the heartlessness of that school of political economists, that I could not resist writing a reply to it, which I sent, in the form of a letter to his lordship, to Douglas Jerrold, for insertion in his newspaper, with a private note to himself, and requesting him, if he printed it, to send me six copies of the paper. Now, he has not printed it, nor given me any acknowledgment under his 'notices to correspondents,' but he has sent the

papers, which last fact makes me suppose there is some mistake. Could you, therefore, be kind enough to pay into their office the accompanying stamps, in payment for the newspapers, and ask whether he means to insert it in his paper?"

Jerrold did not insert the letter, and a few days later Forster writes acknowledging that possibly there may have been some reason for his not having done so, as he confesses that he had written in an "angry, unchristian-like spirit; and, though I do take Lord Radnor to be a good imitation of the evil one, yet old Satan and all his imps like their enemies to swear at them."

To one of the ladies, whose friendship he had made in Dublin, he writes:—

"Rawdon, near Leeds, February 28th, 1847.

". . . How kind of you to remember not to forget me, and my hankering after that comic love-song, for which and your note my hearty thanks. I wonder who wrote those lines? It must have been somebody who knew what he or she was writing about; which is what very few scribblers do, either on love or flirtation.

"But this is no time for love songs or flirtations. What horrors you must daily see and hear, for the country around Cork appears to keep up a fearful rivalry with Mayo in death and disease. My father is still in the West; the last report from him is from Sligo. I have this morning received some

copies of my report of my last Irish tour, so I venture to send you one; it is, you see, published by our London committee, and dresses me up in a Quaker garb, like a good boy, as I sometimes am.

"I wish I was able to return to Ireland. Were my time my own, I would stay there till next harvest, for, painful as it is to witness the sufferings of this fearful famine, it is still more painful to brood over them at a distance. I do not wonder at your being struck with the awful antiquity of the people you meet—or rather of their ancestors (I am getting worse than Irish in my 'bulls'). I made the same remark myself in the West. Sometimes I was somewhat amused by this pride of family. Nevertheless, I have great respect, not to say reverence, for real blood. Would that those who have it would now take their right place; that the descendants of the heroes who ruled in Ireland's fights centuries ago, would step forward and take their place in this fearful conflict with the angel of death who now hovers over their country. This year will try Ireland's metal, will surely bring out the master minds from amongst her men; ay! and her women too. There is scope enough for the effective exercise of woman's enthusiasm, which means, being interpreted, Do you, Miss ——, fascinate the young gentlemen into philanthropy. Shame all the young men who cluster round you into their duty to their country. You can if you will. . . .

"Mrs. C—— is, I think, a friend of O'Connell's. Poor old man! I fear he is fast going, and it makes me quite low to think of it. I wonder whether the story be true, going the round of the papers, saying that his last words to all his friends as they leave him are, 'Pray for me, pray for me.' If true, it is very touching.

"I suppose you know what I fixed with your mother in Dublin? that you are all coming to see me, as soon as the leaves are out, and I intend to ask 'Festus' to meet you.

"Believe me, my dear Miss ——,

"Your very sincere friend,

"W. E. Forster."

"He was always deeply interested in Ireland," writes an Irish clergyman who first made his acquaintance at the time of the famine, "never tired of hearing of it, and I had much to tell. I had been touched deeply by the Young Ireland movement. Thomas Davis, its leader, had been my friend, and I had been acquainted more or less intimately with many of its rank and file. I knew John Dillon well, and I have sometimes thought, as I have read with grief the gross and bitter abuse of Mr. Forster by the Parnellites, that if they only knew how tenderly he regarded the whole people, the abuse would cease. I record one little fact. When Smith O'Brien attempted a rising, my friend John Dillon was with him. They were

enthusiastic, and had been led to believe, or had persuaded themselves, that Ireland would rise to a man at their call. They called, and no one came; and they themselves were proclaimed as traitors. In talking the matter over and giving expression to my regrets about Dillon, I said, 'What a position would mine be, if he came to me for shelter! He might think himself quite safe from suspicion of living with an English curate. He knows well enough I should not betray him, but we could not give him room.' The answer was, 'Send him to me. He would be quite safe here. No one would suspect a Quaker.'"

CHAPTER VII.

1848: AT HOME AND ABROAD.

DURING the year 1846 Mr. Forster had removed from his lodgings at Bolton to a house at Rawdon, near Apperley Bridge, where he established himself amidst surroundings suited to his growing prosperity in business. His home at Rawdon soon became the centre of attraction, not merely to the more intellectual and public-spirited of his Yorkshire neighbours, but to men and women of national distinction. The visit to Ireland, and the enthusiastic manner in which he had worked in the Irish cause in England, had made his name known in many quarters far removed from those with which he had hitherto been familiar. He had been asked by Lord Russell to give him his impressions of the condition of the Irish people. He had been in constant communication with the editors of the great Liberal newspapers both in London and the provinces; and in London as well as Bradford people were beginning to recognize the fact that his was no ordinary individuality.

Among the many friends who visited him at Rawdon, none were more welcome than Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle, who, in the summer of 1847, paid him a three weeks' visit. For Carlyle Forster had the greatest admiration. But whilst he admired the fervour and force of the great writer intensely, he had, if possible, a still keener admiration for, and a truer sympathy with, Mrs. Carlyle. Only those who have heard him speak of that gifted woman, know how deep was the impression which she had made upon him. Once, talking of her, he said, "She was one of those few women to whom a man could talk all day, or listen all day, with equal pleasure."

The visit of Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle to Rawdon was therefore one of the brightest spots in his early career in Yorkshire. It was besides an event which, to a certain degree, signalized the fact that he was something more than an ordinary West Riding manufacturer. His neighbours knew now that he was in close and intimate intercourse with some of the greatest thinkers and writers of his day. Long before this he had made the acquaintance of Lord Houghton, then Mr. Richard Monckton Milnes. Lord Houghton had met him first, soon after his arrival in Bradford, at a local dinner-party, and had been greatly struck by the young man's earnestness and transparent sincerity. He invited Forster to Fryston, and their friendship was cemented during his brief stay there. It was

a friendship which was never broken; and it was one which bore fruit afterwards, both in Forster's political and social career.

Now, whilst the Carlyles were his guests, Monckton Milnes came over to Rawdon to join the party, and seldom has one small house in a West Riding valley sheltered four more remarkable persons than were then gathered together. The letters which Forster addressed during this pleasant time to Mrs. Charles Fox, and to his friend Barclay Fox, show how stimulating was the effect of the presence of his distinguished guests alike upon his brain and his spirits. Part of the programme of the Carlyles' sojourn, it should be said, was a trip into Derbyshire.

To MRS. C. FOX.

"Nag's Head, Castleton, Derbyshire,

"August 16th, 1847.

"Past nine in the morning, but no chance of breakfast yet. Carlyle has just informed me from the abysses of his bed he will be ready in half an hour, and Mrs. C., I am told, has been poorly all night, so I will catch a chance of beginning a letter to you. I have been spaaing in this distinguished company now for three days. I joined them at Matlock on Friday morning. We took a drive to and picnic that day in Dovedale, came *via* Haddon Hall to Buxton on Saturday, and on here yesterday, performing the Peak Cavern in

the afternoon. To-night we hope to arrive at Rawdon, *via* Sheffield.

"I find my company not only informing but most pleasant and easy. Mrs. C. like a girl in her delight at new scenes and situations, and the master uncommonly good-humoured and accommodating, glad to find any one to relieve him of the trouble of travelling, his general tone a good-natured humorous sarcasm, but every now and then a burst of furious indignation or a flash of fiery eloquence.

"His pictorial power is wonderful, I should think unmatched. It is pleasant to see such a mind so completely at play, and moreover they have both of them so much real heart and genial kindness about them that I believe I shall form a decided friendship with them. It's little notion of a Sunday they have; but last evening I deluded them into a Methody meeting-house, for which I did catch it afterwards. It was a sad failure, a local preacher full of fluent cant, or rather a pair of them praying at one another with all sorts of disgusting contortions. I was sorry to be with him at such a burlesque of prayer. He was furious afterwards, declaring that their belief, if any, was in 'a heaven of lubber-land,' 'a paradise of Burton ale and greasy cakes,' and declared that little more would have roused him to protest, that it would be well 'if they would forthwith cast off this rotten blanket, and step forth in their naked

skin,—said rotten blanket being the Methody garment of the religious idea.

"Of course he constantly utters shocks to all one's ideas and principles, sacred and profane; but it is no use arguing with him, as he takes no notice of argument, not even of a contradictory fact, so I wait the exhaustion of his fury, and then, if absolutely needful, content myself with a quiet, simple protest.

"*Rawdon, August 17th.*—I was interrupted yesterday and have been unable to get on with my scrawl till now, when my guests have both departed to bed. Mrs. C. was really ill all yesterday, but revived when she got quietly here, and both of them seem really to enjoy the quiet of this place, declaring that there is more of that 'desideratum' than they have had for many years; but I suppose they will soon find it unbearably dull and take themselves off. We had one rich scene on our journeyings. Determined to see Buxton properly, we drove to a first-class hotel in the Crescent—a stylish, comfortless temple of *ennui*, inhabited by old maids, and worn-out half-pay *roués*, and peaked-up parsons, a species of walking white neck-cloths, altogether a race of men the most opposite to Carlylean that can be conceived. Well, down we went to the *table-d'hôte*, self at the bottom as last comer, C. and his wife on one side of me, and a tall, starched, gentlemanly Irish parson, the ruling genius, *loci* on my left. For a time all went on

easily in silent feeding or low grumbling, till at last Carlyle began to converse with parson, then to argue with him on Ireland, then to lose thought of all arguments or *table-d'hôte*, and to declaim. How they did stare. All other speech was hushed; some looked aghast, others admiring. Of course they none of them had ever heard or seen any approach to such monster. We remained *incog.* the whole time, spite of all the schemes of the guests, and the entreaties of the waiter to book our names, and my proposal to Mrs. C. to save our expenses by showing him at so much a head."

To BARCLAY FOX.

"Rawdon, near Leeds, August 27th, 1847.

"MY DEAR BARCLAY,

"Thanks for thy note. It certainly is time for both of us to find something to do beyond merely 'minding our business,' though after all these three last words do really include the whole object of life, if we could but discover what 'our business' really included. I am sorry thou couldst not come to me.

"Carlyle and his wife are still with me, and seem to take to Rawdon kindly; like the quiet, said quiet being both novel and refreshing. He is busy sleeping, and declares himself lazy as a lotos-eater. She certainly is better than when

I first found them at Matlock, and a most pleasant companion she is. I have formed quite a friendship with her, and I trust with him too. Catching such a visit is of course quite a trophy in life, but one accidental advantage would amuse you, viz. the salutary discipline of having a man in the house whose way is constantly consulted before my own; partly because he will have it, and partly because I prefer giving it him.

"Monckton Milnes came yesterday and left this morning, a pleasant, companionable little man, well-fed and fattening; with some small remnant of poetry in his eyes and nowhere else, delighting in paradoxes, but good-humoured ones; defending all manner of people and principles in order to provoke Carlyle to abuse them, in which laudable enterprise he must have succeeded to his heart's content, and for a time we had a most amusing evening, reminding me of a naughty boy rubbing a fierce cat's tail backwards, and getting on between furious growls and fiery sparks, but managing to avoid the threatened scratches. . . .

"Thine ever,

"W. E. FORSTER."

To MRS. C. FOX.

"Rawdon, September 6th, 1847

"I wish I may get a letter from thee to-morrow, for I am become very anxious to hear.

I fear this raw, winter-like weather will suit you ill; and, in short, it is as much as I can do to keep my mind in patience for a letter.

"The Carlyles left me this morning, both for Leeds, then he for Manchester and Scotland, and she for Barnsley, to see some friends of hers. His holiness and I have got on remarkably well these last few days, quite lovingly, and before leaving to-day he actually committed some pretty speeches to the effect that they had 'reason to be thankful for three pleasant peaceful weeks,' 'a sabbath in the mountains,' etc., to which I purred forth a modest complacent return of gratitude for their visit, and so we parted.

"I miss them much. In spite of all, or rather through all, he certainly is a most delightful companion, a rich store of hearty, genial, social kindness shining through his assumed veil of misanthropy, and often all the more conspicuous from his efforts to conceal or disown it, and his eccentric humour striking laughter out of all manner of everyday trivial occurrences. What a fearful, fiend-like creature he would be in his dark moods, when the devil of dyspepsia is upon him, without this merciful safety-valve of humour! Nor, when I got accustomed to it, did I find his will by any means inconvenient. It is not one of those wills which chills or constrains me, capable indeed of strong fierce effort for opposition, but not a constant influence, of which the possessor is less conscious than any

of those around him; so, after all, with tact one gets one's own way quite sufficiently with him.

"If Carlyle's companionship has had any mental effect upon me, it has been to give me a greater desire and possibly an increased power to discern the real 'meanings of things,' to go straight to the truth wherever its hiding-place, and sometimes his words, not so much by their purport as by their tone and spirit, sounded through me like the blast of a trumpet, stirring up all my powers to the battle of life.

"Another effect has been to make me desire to sift my faith, not, I trust, in a frivolous sceptical temper, but in order to get yet firmer foothold, to strengthen my convictions, so that I may in future be able to meet him or his likes, not with a mere logical opinion, but with a living faith which might prove its own power. Our belief, indeed, if we do not, as Coleridge said, merely 'believe that we believe,' ought to be wound round our very heart-strings, and always present in our thoughts and evident in all our words and deeds; but to attain such a faith as this I suppose both earnest humble prayer and hard struggling thought are needed. It is, indeed, sad to see so much of the high intellect of this age at issue with Christianity. I cannot but believe that this jar, this war of truths, is not altogether owing to the rebellious wilfulness of human reason, but partly to the peculiar character of our age, which is, I suppose,

really to use the slang term of the philosophers, 'an age of transition,' but it does seem as though the old clothing of Christianity was worn out, as though a new expression, a fresh texture (?) of the Christian idea was needed to suit the increased stature of the human mind. Men grumble at Romanism and Church of Englandism and Protestant Dissenterism, and cannot be convinced that all these are mere frozen formulas of Christianity, which after all is no 'ism' at all. Quakerism is doubtless the liveliest of the 'isms,' but still it wants universality, and somehow is hardly, to use one of Carlyle's best expressions, altogether 'conformable with the everlasting laws of God written on our nature.'

"But I am scrawling on, I fear, sad trash about 'isms,' and formulas, and undressed ideas, and an age of transition, which irresistibly reminds me of Master Oldenbach's mode of 'turning over a new leaf' by changing his shirt after each crisis in his pursuit of the 'beloved object.'

"Mrs. C. has taken off a wild, furious, spitfire of a kitten, out of which she has been sedulously and most vainly trying to 'love the devil,' *à la* Emerson. She begged me for a name, and so I have suggested 'Quack,' as short for Quaker and emblematic of the giver."

The visit of the Carlyles, delightful as it was, did not, however, pass over without an incident, which might have been attended by very serious

consequences. This was an accident which happened to Forster and Mrs. Carlyle, whilst they were driving from Bradford to his house at Rawdon The horse ran away, and both were thrown out of the gig, he sustaining a severe sprain of the ankle. Writing to his mother, shortly after the occurrence, he says, "Jane Carlyle was with me, and she behaved with wonderful presence of mind; turned her back to the horse, and embraced the gig, and so just rolled out, and was not hurt. As I had nothing but the reins to hold by, and was nearly standing upright, in order to have more purchase to pull, I was of course shot out some way. I had bought the mare a few days before—warranted quiet in harness—and so she seemed, both when I rode and drove her, till this time. But, owing I suppose to my better keep, she pulled desperately that day, and all down that long hill from Bradford I had hard work to keep her in; forced to wind the reins round both hands, and stand up to pull. However, I had managed to hold her till coming down hill, when I thought the worst was over. She galloped off, in consequence of Carlyle's overtaking us riding. I should have stopped her, but part of the kicking-strap gave way, so she managed to get one leg over the shaft, and as both the shafts broke, of course the gig fell forward, and we out."

This, if popular tradition is to be believed, was not by any means Mr. Forster's first misadventure when driving. Some of the old inhabitants of

Bradford still remember the strange figure he cut when he drove into the town, on his way to business, perched on the top of a very high gig, and driving an unusually big horse, with reins that were generally loose, and at a pace which might almost have been expected to call for the interference of the authorities.

Writing to his wife (March 31st, 1863), he tells an amusing story which refers to this period of his career: "Fison has got a story of my bachelor days which will amuse thee. Do you remember J. D——, of Yeadon, that old, fat, round-faced Methody wool-stapler? Well, it appears, in the days of the old mare, I was driving home from Bradford, and took him up at Eccleshall Moor. The pace down the hill astonished him to the extent of shutting his eyes and hunching himself up on the seat with hands clenched in mortal fear; and glad he was to get home. Soon after his son came in looking very glum. 'What's t' matter with thee, lad?' 'What's t' matter with thee, feyther? Why could na' thou see me a bit sin'? Thou might have taken notice of thy son, though thou was in Mr. Forster's gig.' 'Eh, bless thee, lad; I had more to do than to take notice of thee. I was ower throng (busy) making my peace with my Maker.'"

The year 1848 was in many respects memorable in the life of Forster, as well as in the history of Europe. It was the year in which, for the first

time, he may be said to have taken his own line in politics. Up to this time, though he had thought much and read widely, and though his distinctive characteristics had never been concealed from his friends, it had not fallen to his lot to figure before the general public, either in Bradford or elsewhere, as a man of exceptional ideas or characteristics. To think deeply and weigh carefully, taking all sides of a question into his consideration, to decide deliberately, and then to speak strongly, had, even in his youth, been Forster's method; but, hitherto, it was only in the circle of his own friends, or whilst employed in work so entirely congenial, as that in which he was engaged in Ireland, that this method had been used. To Forster had now come, as there comes to most human beings, the moment in which he had to choose between the easy and pleasant course, which has for its reward the applause of one's friends and neighbours, and the hard and painful road, strewn with flints, on which a man is followed by the maledictions, rather than the blessings, even of those whom he most loves and reveres.

Mr. Forster, as his correspondence with Thomas Cooper proves, had long been in favour of the widest extension of the franchise, and already his advanced opinions upon this subject had been noted with something like dismay by his more timid and conservative friends. But, up to this

point, nothing had happened to bring his pronounced Radicalism into prominence in the public life of Bradford,* and the more cautious of the Liberal politicians of the place were in good hopes that, when the time for deciding came, Forster would recoil from doctrines which they themselves regarded with abhorrence, and which, at that epoch of our history, were almost as unfashionable as any that a man could hold. Those who made this calculation had little knowledge of Forster's force of character, or of the tenacity with which he clung to those opinions which he had deliberately formed. No man was ever less prone to make up his mind hastily; no man was ever more anxious to learn everything that could be said, upon all sides of a question, before coming to a decision; but, when once the decision had been formed, there was no one so stubborn and determined in adhering to it as he was.

Up to the beginning of 1848 the belief in a large extension of the franchise—in manhood suffrage, in fact—had been merely a "pious opinion" on the part of men in Forster's position in life; but with 1848 came a social and political upheaval, the like of which has not since been seen in Europe. Many countries of the Continent

* Shortly before this he had strongly supported the proposed candidature of Lord Ashley for Bradford; the ground of his action being his strong approval of the Ten Hours' Bill, which was at that time opposed by many leading Radicals.

have indeed passed through still sharper crises since then; but England at all events has happily known nothing within the memory of this generation which will compare with 1848. The condition of the working classes was very serious. Trade was bad; food was dear; and political discontent of a pronounced character was rampant. Social heresies had obtained a strong hold upon many of the more intelligent and better educated of the artisans. There was a general feeling of dissatisfaction with the methods by which the government of the country was carried on, and those who did not realize the intense conservatism of the English nature, or the impregnable strength of English institutions, believed that this country, like France, was on the verge of a great social and political revolution. The Chartist movement had secured the adherence of an enormous multitude of working men. Looking back from a period at which most of the points of the charter have been embodied in Acts of Parliament, the movement itself seems to have been singularly pacific, and even laudable in its character; but in 1848 the classes viewed it very differently. In the opinion of society it was nothing less than an attempt to overthrow those institutions under which England had become free and great, and any one who supported that movement ran no small danger of falling under a social ban.

Bradford, in its economic condition, was no

exception to the majority of English towns. The working classes were suffering; and political agitation and discontent followed hard upon the heels of this suffering. Forster's intense sympathy with the working men was conspicuous now. He had not yet formed any clear opinion as to the means by which the existing discontent and the poverty and privations of the people could be remedied. His inclination was, however, towards the doctrine that the State is bound to see to the welfare of its children, and he was strongly tempted by the notion of national workshops, in which the honest labourer might always find sufficient work for his hands, and an adequate recompense for his toil.

Mention has been made of the persons of intellectual distinction whom he welcomed to his house at Rawdon; but it would be a great mistake to suppose that, either then or at any subsequent period of his career, it was these alone whose society he sought. There are still living, in the West Riding of Yorkshire, not a few working men, who have never risen above the rank to which they were born, who can give testimony to the contrary. It was Forster's delight to gather round him in his home working men who showed that they were inspired by an earnest desire to aid in the solution of the great social and political problems of the time; and many an evening did he spend in quiet discussion with such men. They, on their part, learned to regard the young manu-

facturer with strong affection and trust. It has already been told how the working classes of Bradford were looking to him as their destined leader. Individual working men in the town and the district surrounding it regarded him as something more; they believed that he was destined to play a great part on the stage of public affairs, and they saw in him a man who was hereafter to rescue their common country from the ignorance and the poverty from which its people suffered.

It is not surprising, therefore, that in that stormy spring of 1848, Forster was found sympathizing strongly with the objects for which the Chartists were striving. He was one in heart with them, so far as their principal aims were concerned. At a meeting which the mayor of Bradford had summoned, for the purpose of considering the propriety of petitioning Parliament in favour of the charter, he gave a distinct statement of his opinions with regard to the various points of that celebrated document. He went as far, he said, in favour of universal suffrage as any one present, and he was entirely with them with regard to the abolition of the property qualifications for members of Parliament. As to the ballot, however, he hated secrecy, and thought that if they obtained universal suffrage they would not want protection of that kind. He was not prepared to vote in favour of annual parliaments, nor did he regard the payment of members as advisable, whilst the

question of electoral districts was one which he had not yet considered. It will be seen that upon the main point for which the Chartists were contending, Mr. Forster was entirely with them.

There was, however, one subject upon which he differed, and differed resolutely from most of their number. The idea of obtaining redress by physical force—in other words, of resorting to revolutionary violence for the purpose of securing their ends—had fascinated large bodies of the working classes, and was openly advocated by some of the more prominent of their leaders. It was an idea, however, which Forster not only never adopted, but which he most strenuously opposed. To secure the reform of bad laws by moral pressure, and not by the erection of barricades, still less by a resort to the weapons of the assassin, was the policy which he advocated. It cost him, at the time, not a little of his popularity with the masses; but this was a fact which could not weigh with him against an imperative duty; and both in season and out of season he was urgent in striving to impress upon the reformers the necessity of abstaining even from the remotest threat of violence for the purpose of advancing their cause. Yet, though he stood firm on the side of law and order, it was not in his nature to content himself merely by pointing out to the physical force party the folly and the wickedness of the course which they advocated. He sought to win them to his side by

proving to them that they had the sympathy and support of many who were in a different social position, and that it was through the disinterested assistance upon which they might thus rely that their ultimate victory could alone be achieved. It was enough, however, for the bigoted opponents of all reform, and for the timid souls who could not understand the passionate desire of the Chartists to secure that which everybody now admits to b their fair share in the government of the countr to know that he sympathized with the object at which the reforming party aimed, in order to ensure his condemnation in their minds as one who was even worse than the most dangerous of the agitators.

For the purpose of diverting the Chartists Bradford from the thought of resorting to lence, and in order to convince them that had friends in their social superiors, he drew u paper expressing sympathy with the just dema of the working-classes for political reform. H eagerly canvassed for signatures to this docum among the manufacturers and other influen residents in the borough. Writing to his mother, April 4th, 1848, he says :—

"More than five hundred electors, or more than a quarter of the constituency, have signed the paper, and I do honestly believe it has done real good with the mob." Then he adds significantly, "If any of my real friends are hurt with the

I have lately taken, I am very sorry for it; but I cannot help it, as I did it for the best, and was very anxious to do the right thing, and to the best of my ability did it. I do not think that either thou or Gussy [his mother's old pony] need have any fear of an outbreak. The only districts where such is possible are in places like Bradford, where there are immense masses of hungry men, who are tired of periodical attacks of famine and inclined to try their own powers of government, seeing all others have failed. Unless some political concessions be made to these masses, and unless all classes strive earnestly to keep them better fed, first or last there will be a convulsion; but I believe the best political method of preventing it is by the middle-class sympathizing with the operatives, and giving themselves power to oppose their unjust claims by helping them in those which are reasonable." This, it need hardly be said, was not the view which commended itself at that time to many of his eminently respectable friends, and he was made to feel that, when a man takes an unpopular course at a moment of political and social excitement, he must be prepared to abide the consequences. Writing in his diary he says:—

"*April* 16*th*, 1848 (*Sunday*).—I am suffering persecution for radicalism's sake. If it were for anything I really cared about, persecution would be quite a pleasant variety, but as it is, it is a provoking nuisance. Last Monday was the presen-

tation of the Chartist petition (which petition, by-the-by, turns out a lying humbug, as to both quantity and quality of signatures). The delegates of the National Convention talked pikes and armed processions and all manner of horrors, and great was the fear thereat, and the swearing of respectabilities in as constables, and at these wretched Chartists. The *Times* and the Government and all cockneys were so much alarmed, that we took fright in Bradford also, and swore in some one thousand five hundred defenders of the peace, myself among others, and summoned the yeomanry, and even yet have our ears alive to rumours of pikes and lead stolen for bullets, etc. Many of our Liberals, thinking that the best mode of quieting the mob was by evidence of sympathy on the part of the middle-classes, and an attempt at least at their guidance, we called a meeting of the more active members of Colonel Thompson's committee, at which I was chairman, and at which, after much palaver, we decided on the electors addressing a manifesto to the non-electors, Godwin and self being appointed to draw it up. So we concocted somewhat of a washy performance, promising to aid them in their efforts for the suffrage, if peaceable, but loudly preaching order and abusing violence. This was signed by most of our big guns, T. Salt, Forbes, James Ellis, John Priestman, and between five hundred and six hundred electors —more than a quarter of the whole constituency—

and was, I believe, a real anodyne to the mob, but a sad stumblingblock and rock of offence to all Conservatives. Accordingly, Friday morning, upon my entering ——'s bank to advise a bill—happily with more than would cover the advice—to my surprise, —— hurled at me a shower of abuse across the counter, in presence of his nephew and the clerks, and informed me my conduct was a discredit to my family and myself. In regard to myself that was a matter of little consequence; but for my family he was pleased to express his sorrow, and wound up a harangue—in the course of which I am thankful to say I kept my temper, though he lost his—by the practical announcement that, having no longer any confidence either in me or any of the signers of the horrible placard, he for his part was not inclined to trust his money to such rebels. Whereupon I thanked him for the information and marched off, writing, when I reached the warehouse, a note to the firm, requesting to know if the firm adopted ——'s opinion, and if so, what were their business intentions. To this note I expect an answer to-morrow. Meantime, I am very anxious lest I should be driven by such threats, which, abstractedly speaking, deserve nothing but contempt, to take stronger or more decisive political steps than my conscience will approve. I am determined to tell no lies, either to the mob or to myself, if I can help it; and so I am looking hard at this condition of the masses

question, and have been employing this Sabbath in reading Louis Blanc's 'Organisation de Travail,' re-reading Carlyle's 'Chartism the Peril of the Nation,' Thornton's 'Over Population,' etc. This book of Louis Blanc's is the exposition of his social workshops, whereby he expects to remodel society and banish misery, and which he is now trying on a large scale in Paris, to utter failure, say the papers. But so short a trial, in such a turbulent time, can hardly, I think, prove the failure."

How little Forster was deterred from taking that which he believed to be the right course, even by the threats of his banker, was shown a few days later. A meeting of Chartists was held in Bradford which was popularly described as a meeting of rebels. Forster himself attended it, and "roared from the top of a waggon to six or eight thousand people for nearly three quarters of an hour, and pushed a strong moral force resolution down their throats, at the cost of much physical force exertion" on his own part. "I relieved my mind to the people, and pitched into the National Convention, and in short preached a sermon, which they took better than might have been expected."

With regard to this meeting he wrote to his father as follows:—

"I am grieved that my friends in London are put out with that public meeting. I certainly did

believe, and do still believe, that I should have done wrong in not going there, for, as I had influence with the people, I was bound to exercise it. We look forward with some anxiety to the possibility of a disturbance spreading here from other places in the course of next week. It will not begin here, but if it be prevented here, it will be because the working classes believe the middle classes sympathize with them. The feeling in favour of universal suffrage is a very different thing here from what it is with you or in London. It is a resolute, long-held determination by the large body of the operatives, and they will not rest till they get some great concession; and, considering the very large proportion they bear here toward other classes they demand great tact in management."

It was whilst his mind was thus fully occupied by the exciting political affairs of which both England and the Continent were the scene, that he received an invitation to visit Paris, in company with some friends, Mr. and Mrs. Paulet, for the purpose of seeing, on the spot, the fruits of the revolution. He left Bradford on Friday, April 28th, spending part of the next day with the Carlyles, in London, and started on Sunday for Paris. The party consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Paulet and Miss Jewsbury. The story of his visit, as told by himself in his diary, still possesses a certain amount of political interest, in addition to that

which attaches to it in connection with Mr. Forster himself. They reached Paris on Monday, May 1st.

"*May 26th.*—Since my last entry, I have had a fortnight of deep interest and excitement in France. I started Friday, April 28th; slept at London; took tea with the Carlyles on Saturday, and off we went on Sunday; our 'we' being Mr. and Mrs. Paulet, Miss Jewsbury, and self—Emerson not being ready to join us. We went *via* Folkestone; beautiful passage; sleeping Sunday night at Boulogne. Next morning, Tuesday, May 2nd, we chiefly shopped—the ladies seeking bonnets, and I gazing about like a gormous Essex calf, all my intellect absorbed in a fixed idea of indignant aversion to the men who built the tower of Babel, making my tongue of so little avail. Nevertheless, I did get on beyond my expectation—more, however, by dint of roar and gesture than words, as Miss Jewsbury said, 'as if I talked with my fists.' We went into that magnificent church of the Madeleine: Mass as usual performing, with all manner of gorgeous mummery, under that mighty pictorial lie of Napoleon kneeling before Christ, making the *amende honorable* to religion. A few minutes after leaving the church, we chanced on a crowd, under the Hotel des Affaires Étrangères, round a tall, gaunt-looking man, bloused, with large horn spectacles stuck at the end of his long nose, chanting forth in most

quizzical fashion a set of political parodies, in prose and verse—the Lord's Prayer, the creed, the confession of sins, etc., applied to Louis Philippe and Guizot. Here were the two extremes—the hypocritical lie, and its blasphemous inversion—close together. There are troops of caricatures on the walls of Paris, chiefly Louis Philippe and Guizot; little real wit or humour. In order to be witty, it seems as though Frenchmen must be either blasphemous or dirty; but their want of the humorous is a real misfortune. We should laugh down much of the mischief of their revolution, and though ridicule does harm exceptionally and partially, in the main and long run it is sure to do good. It blows up many bubbles, and can destroy nothing that has real life. I observed there were no caricatures of the Provisional Government, or any powers that be, with the exception of a few skits at *les femmes librées*—all kicks at the fallen lion. We dined at the *table-d'hôte* for the first and last time, sticking afterwards to the restaurateurs. In the evening we, that is the two ladies and self—for the others could not get in, the throng was so great—went to see Rachel act *Phœdre*, and hear her sing the Marseillaise. The acting seemed to me better than English, more natural; but the Marseillaise was memorable. Brandishing the tricolour and thrilling that large theatre with her rich tones of defiance, she was, as it were, an incarnation not of liberty, but of license. She was

much cheered, and the theatre was crowded, I suppose on her account.

"*May 3rd.*—We went to the Luxembourg. We could not get in to the Chamber of Peers, where sat Louis Blanc's commission of labour; but wandered through those grand galleries and magnificent gardens; blouses, several of them boys (the *garde mobile*), standing sentry in the corridors and marching through the gardens. We also went to Louis Blanc's tailor workshop. Some one thousand five hundred tailors in the old debtor prison of Clichy, working away, or professing to do so, singing the Marseillaise; all—good workers and bad—earning two francs a day; a species of organization which will produce but little labour, be a premium upon idlers, and quickly disgust the good workmen, as I heard before I left it had done.

"Much struck at the Hotel de Ville by the respect paid by the mob to the furniture. It had been one of the chief scenes of the revolution, and tens of thousands, they said, had poured through; but the splendid curtains and mirrors were unhurt, even the carpet looked hardly the worse for wear, and no fracture, but one head of Louis Philippe, which had had a bullet passed through it. In one room there was a congregation of flags—presents to the republic—among others, the green flag of Erin, from Smith O'Brien and Co. In a corner of the room was the address of the English Chartists; framed. The large space in front of the Hôtel de

Ville seemed the great rendezvous for the street politicians. There were several groups of earnest talkers, chiefly blouses. In one we heard an old stern man quoting Danton; in another a man was haranguing furiously against all money scrapers and aristocrats. Same evening the Bey introduced us to a club of the National Guard, or the Moderates—I suppose all guard men, and so *bourgeois*—held in a large riding-school. There were present full a thousand in the body of the club, and several in the galleries. Many ladies. We thought it would be a tame affair, but it turned out violent enough. The main subject was denunciation of Blanqui, Barbes, and the Exaltés, who had put out a violent proclamation that day, and were thought to be projecting an *émeute*. They were especially fierce against Barbes, because he was one of their own colonels. It was a strange scene, vividly recalling the reports of the Jacobins and Cordeliers, with the tribune, the president with his bell, the fierce eagerness of the speakers, rushing from all sides to the tribune, far too earnest to make long speeches. It was plain they felt the subject a question, if not of life, of the means of living: and, in truth, all Paris is now absorbed in this contest between the *bourgeoisie*, the property men and friends of peace and order, with the *ouvriers*, or rather, with the demagogues, communists, and other ultras, who strive to excite them.

"*May 4th.*—A glorious cloudless day for the

christening of the republic. We ensconced ourselves, about eleven, in chairs in the garden of the Tuileries facing the Chamber of Deputies, hoping to see the Provisional Government proceed to the opening of the assembly. There certainly were immense masses of people. The Place de la Concorde almost filled with National Guards and spectators, and the Champs Elysées and gardens of the Tuileries swarming with crowds. I swarmed up one of the statues by the obelisk, amid the acclamations of the surrounding populace—sitting on some good lady's lap, name unknown—Victory, probably — and there fraternized between two blouses, to my great comfort, till driven down by the guards, who would not allow the statue to be desecrated. It was vain to attempt to discern the members of the Government as they walked up, and it was so long before the assembly came to the actual christening—the proclaiming of the republic—that all the party, barring Mrs. Paulet and self, were tired and hungered off. We waited on, and at length took refuge in a wretched café, a house of call for guardsmen, in the inner room whereof we were discussing some champagne, and a most mysterious preparation of cold meat, when we heard firing of cannon, and a mighty scuttering among the guards. So out we rushed, and charged all through the Place de la Concorde, up to the Chamber of Deputies, the gallant guardsmen making way for a lady. We caught a

glimpse of the deputies, in their white waistcoats, announcing the republic, but could not descry faces. There were considerable cries of 'Vive la République!' but not what an Englishman would have called a good shout. But then the French do not understand hurraing. The clashing of the bayonets, and the hoisting of the caps on their points were the most picturesque portions of the manifestation.

"*June 3rd.*—Divers distractions. Chartist row and other confusions have so beset me this past week, that I have been unable to journalize, and must now content myself with a brief notation, sufficient to recall facts and sights hereafter to my memory.

"*May 5th (Friday).*—Breakfasted with Monckton Milnes, whom I found at Meurice's, fraternizing with everybody, and by his advice went to Blanqui's Club. Mrs. P. and I bought the tickets at the office, near the Faubourg St. Antoine, up three pairs of stairs; a pair of dark gloomy rooms, filled with most suspicious-looking blouses, more like animals than men, with their fierce eyes and long Marat-like jaws, and naked hairy breasts — Blanqui's bodyguard, in short. Very civil, however, they were to us, quite polite; and in the evening at the club, one of them, remembering Mrs. P., put us in before our turn, to the great disgust of the rest of the queue. The club was held in a small handsome

theatre, the members in the pit, and the audience, many of them well-dressed ladies, in the galleries. The debate not exciting, but discussions of abstract questions of government, absolute will of the people, and the like constitution-mongering. Blanqui himself, a small thin man, with close-cut hair, piercing fox-like eyes, which never looked his audience in the face, shrewd deep forehead, insinuating untrue smile, altogether a calculating, conspiring, bad face, but a very determined expression. There was no eloquence whatever in his dull dry dogmatism, which reminded me of Robespierre; and he seemed to rule solely by persevering strength of will and persistence of purpose. A slight, well-formed, pleasing-looking boy, his blouse quite tastily girt with the Montaguard sash, was the most characteristic speaker. The mingled confidence and courtesy with which he defended the absolute government of reason against that of caprice was amusing enough. Probably most of these members were secretly armed. The club was known to have depôts.

"*May 7th* (*Sunday*).—In the morning just walked in to the fine old church of St. Roch, to look at Mass. I like the side chapels in these large churches, where people can and do commune with themselves, Quaker fashion, making use of the saint, I suppose, as a species of peg whereon to hang their meditations. Certainly there is hardly a symptom of the Sabbath in Paris—shops

beginning to shut in the afternoon, when Mass is ending. In the afternoon to Versailles. Mob having pulled the railway bridge down, had to cross the Seine by a raft bridge—a most inconvenient practical result of the revolution. Too late to go into the palace, but saw the fountains play. Very magnificent; crowds of people, looking merry and happy, and the palace blooming enough, as if it had no objection to swear allegiance to the sovereign people. Picked up an informing acquaintance, Ward, an ally of Milnes', a correspondent of the *Weekly Chronicle*, and especially up in the Communists.

"*May 8th (Monday).*—Sadly victimized in the morning. Rushed off at five to Nôtre Dame to hear grand Mass, and the Holy Spirit invoked to bless the republic. Found it was not to be *first* Mass, but *second*, so we had to parade the streets, take refuge in a bathroom, and look and feel pictures of misery till we could get some coffee in a wine shop, and then take ourselves back. Emerson turned up at breakfast, and then Mrs. P. and I sallied off to Mass again, Miss J. having exhausted her religion. The Mass was certainly magnificent, the archbishop giving the sacrament himself. A fine-looking priest, Père Lacordaire, the popular friar, in his Benedictine robes and with his earnest ascetic-looking face, preached; but we did not stay the sermon. The Provisional Government did not turn up to be blessed, but

there were some few deputies, and amongst them the man whom, next to Lamartine, I most wished to see in France—de la Rochejaquelin—a sensible, good-natured English-looking face, with an air of resigned courage, which was quite touching. Evening to some theatre, to hear Frederick Lemaitre, a comic notoriety, in *Robert le Diable;* but I could not sit it out, nor take pleasure in representations of dramatic scoundrels when the whole city was the scene of such a stirring drama. We went out in search of Barbes' Club, but found that it did not meet on Mondays.

"*May 9th (Tuesday).*—The Bey, ladies, and self to St. Denis, the tombs of the old kings and queens, Clovis and Clotilde, Francises, Charleses, Louises, without number, and all these gorgeous arabesques, all these sepulchres of the past, strangely contrasting with the stirring realities of the present. Dined in a homely, comfortable restaurant at St. Denis. Emerson, and Mrs. P., and I, again went in search of Barbes' Club, but found it put off till next day, so went to the first sitting of a free trade club, got up against the Communists. Very respectable, but scanty and tame, altogether a flat affair.

"*May 10th (Wednesday).*—This evening we at last accomplished Barbes' Club, and a most stormy affair it was, even disturbing Emerson's equanimity. A large, low concert room, bad to hear in from its lowness and number of pillars.

We were in a side box, but the pit was crammed full, and in fact all the room. They were a fierce, wild-looking set, but mostly well dressed. Few blouses, chiefly, I suppose, students, *hommes de lettres*, and artists, moustachiod and bearded in all possible varieties. Barbes himself, a tall, handsome, soldier-like man, with resolute lips and commanding air. I was much struck with the audience's intense rage at any, even friendly, interruption, as though they feared their own excitability.

"*May* 11*th* (*Thursday*).—Emerson, who as yet abided in our hotel, brought to breakfast with us Doherty, an Irishman, whose socialism had made England, where he had headed the phalanx, too hot for him. Milnes met him, so we got deep into Communism, Fourrièrism, etc. The man was dogmatic, as all these reformers are; but not exactly a fool. Lately, thinking France had just now her hand in for that sort of job, he had proposed that the State should buy up all the land and redistribute it, according to socialist principles. From him I learn that the great distinction between communism and socialism is that the latter believes in payment according to work done, and the former does not. So Louis Blanc, with his day's work, is of the communist school. In the evening to the Club des Femmes, the first, and I should think the last séance. A most desperate crushing crowd. Barbes' club room. Two guards-

men with bayonets fixed at the door, to prevent the men rushing in without payment; but when we got a few steps off, there was a cry raised of 'à bas les fusils,' some clattering of bayonets, much shrieking of women, a desperate struggle for a minute, ending in the guns being wrenched out of the guards' hands, one of them pitched away behind the gate, and the other downstairs, and we finding ourselves instantaneously in the club, of course without payment. There were some fifty to a hundred well-dressed women, none old, and some quite young and good looking, and an immense crowd of men. Madame ——, the president, made a long, tolerably fluent address, chiefly on organization of women's labour, but much interrupted, partly because it was hard to hear, and partly because there was plainly a crowd of rascals bent on mischief. The Abbé Chatel, a catholic of the Abbé Lamennais School, who had made a most eloquent speech the night before, tried with his majestic air and most sonorous voice to restore order, but in vain; and the man who followed smashed all up by the unlucky expression, 'Messieurs, les dames sont librées à votre discretion,' at which there were roars of laughter, amid which, and the breaking of lamps, and cries of 'à la porte les interrompeurs,' the séance broke up.

"This evening gave me some notion of the superficiality of French gallantry. It breaks

down forthwith before excitement, being chiefly grounded on sexual feeling, whereas English consideration for women, arising more from a wish to protect the weak, is far more permanent and dependable, though less apparent. Few English mobs, none, I think, of education, would have behaved as these fellows did, to the great disgust of some of the audience. 'Ah! les bêtes;' said some women in our box, and one man mourned over 'pauvre France,' 'pauvre nation,' quite disconsolate.

"*May* 12*th* (*Friday*).—This morning made a desperate attempt to get into the National Assembly, which is almost as difficult as to get elected, as no influentiality likes to give tickets over the mob, and the mob stand guard all night. However, one of those harpy commissioners, C——, of the Hôtel de Lille et d'Albion, to whom Lythall introduced me, said he would buy a blouse to keep my place. But this failed. The other blouses informed, blew up our scheme, and after some struggling, much scolding, and fraternizing in wine-shops with riff-raff over cognac and sour wine, I was obliged to retire discomfited, C——, the scoundrel, getting drunk. In the evening, went with Milnes to the Club des Ateliers (workmen opposed to Louis Blanc), held at l'École de Medecin. No women, but many members. Debate whether pleasure or duty the end of man. As earnest about it as though it were

an individual question of bread and butter. All Frenchmen are fluent, never break down, partly I suppose from natural quickness, and partly from recklessness, whether their words have an idea or not. At the clubs, if they fear sticking, they wind up with some one of the everlasting variations of 'liberté, égalité, fraternité.' After the club had decided for duty, by a show of hands, we left; much struck by the picturesque beauty of the old narrow streets, with their tall gable roofs, in the bright moonlight. . . .

"*May* 14*th* (*Sunday*).—In the evening, with Emerson, to Blanqui's Club; an extra, and its last settling with him. He was long in earnest confab with some of his *intimes*, arranging, I suppose, his plan for to-morrow. But after just settling that there was to be a manifestation for Poland next morning, they set to work discussing abstract questions as usual. There were many spectators, but few members.

"*May* 15*th* (*Monday*).—As we intended leaving this evening, packed up early, then waited the Polish procession, which was to pass along our boulevards about half-past eleven. A few hundred marched by crying, 'Vive la Pologne!' probably the advanced guards. But thinking they were all, Mrs. P. and I took a cab in search of news—first to the Chamber of Deputies. This same advance of the procession was stopped at the bridge by the National Guard. All seemed quiet.

Drove on to the Hotel de Ville—quiet there; then to the Place de Bastille and up the Column —still no crowd—then back to the Chamber. This was about two o'clock, and we now found an immense crowd, too dense to drive through, so we got out of the cab, and pushed through it. Under the wall, fronting the Chamber, we found Ward, who told us the mob had pushed over the bridge, wrested the bayonets out of the hands of the guards, doubtless by the command of General Courtair, to the cry of 'À bas les baionettes!' and invaded the National Assembly, which they were now forcing to declare war for Poland. Meantime the procession, mustering, they said, eighty thousand strong, was still defiling in front of the Chamber, to the back streets behind, in columns about twelve deep, not armed, but with several flags. The guards, on the wall of the Chamber garden, were flinging down twigs of trees, as trophies, I suppose, and we asked for some, which they willingly pitched us, especially, 'pour une dame.' Mrs. P. hoisted one on the top of her parasol, and I flourished it in my hand, and so with the watchword of 'Vive la Pologne!' the English passed through with clap of hands. The mob seemed on the whole good humoured enough, though every now and then there was a cry of 'À bas les aristocrates!' Thinking that the Exaltés had been contented with showing their power, and with this manifestation for Poland, and

not knowing they were then dissolving the Assembly and proclaiming a new government of Barbes, Blanqui, and Co., we went off to the Palais Royal to dinner. There was excitement around; groups of National Guards indignant at the insult offered. Still all seemed over, and Emerson joined us from a lecture of Michelet's, quite innocent of the *émeute*. But during dinner we heard the *rappel*, and out we rushed. Ward ran into a communist café, and directly after we saw his head out of the upstairs window, proclaiming a new Provisional Government, of which he began the list, but was stopped, for fear of the house being burnt. The Paulets went back to their hotel, but I, of course, gave up all thought of leaving that night, and went off with Ward to the Hôtel de Ville. All the way down were detachments of National Guards, marching down; pouring on to the quay from different streets. Curious how the beat of drum stirs the blood. I felt quite reckless. Ward was so earnest for news, that he poked his nose into the face of every officer, which at length procured us a cry of 'Down with the English,' and no wonder, so we retired into the crowd for a moment or two, and then pushed on. In front of the Hôtel de Ville was a dense mass of bayonets, and for a few minutes all seemed uncertain as to who held the hotel, but at length a body marched in at the gate, probably then arresting Barbes. Finding

all of one mind there, I crossed the bridge, and went towards the Chamber. Almost all the way I met battalions of guards and the line hurrying towards the hotel, evidently expecting to fight there, amid cries of 'Vive la Garde Nationale!' 'Vive la Ligne!' Twice I met troops of horse, with two or three large cannon, dragged each by four horses at a round trot. This looked like business. The Chamber was surrounded by troops; the bridge in front possessed by them, and all crossing stopped; so I returned towards the hotel, near which I met Lamartine on horseback, at the head of a troop of horse, returning from the arrest of Barbes. I got close to his horse, and walked or rather trotted with him, amid a tremendous crowd of soldiers and bystanders roaring, 'Vive Lamartine!' 'Vive l'Assemblée Nationale!' 'À bas les Anarchistes!' and rushing up to him to shake hands. He was evidently much excited and exhausted; but he is a fine fellow, with a ruling forehead, keen, fiery eye, and determined lips—the bayonet scratch of the 'red flag day' still scarring his cheek bone. He rode straight up to the door of the assembly. There was a rush after him, in which I joined, and so passed through the cordon of guards, and thanks to the *émeute*, got a sight of the Assembly, looking in at the side door with the guards, a much better place than the gallery, which I also tried. I heard Lamartine say a few words, and Garnier Pages and Louis

Blanc try to excuse himself, but they would not hear him. The little fellow, with his boyish handsome face, and arms flung up in earnest gesticulations to be heard, looked droll enough. Then Marrast got up, to tell his story. But as I could not hear him, and was half dead with thirst and fatigue, I went off to the nearest café, through the back garden of the Chamber, where, amid the trees, the bayonets were piled, and the men bivouacking, picturesquely enough, under the clear glorious moonshine. At our hotel, I found our party not gone—too late for the train; and about eleven I sallied off again, went to Meurice's, where I found the Cunninghams, Ward, and Milnes, each telling their adventures (Milnes had been in the Assembly all day), and moralizing over the progress of civilization, which permitted a revolution and a counter-revolution; 80,000 mob arrayed against some 129,000 troops, and scarcely a blow struck. Barbes, Courtais, and the other rebels or suspects arrested, and I think only one life lost in the dispersion of some club. I left Meurice's about one, and finding all quiet, went home to the hotel, and next morning at eight, off we railed, sorry enough to leave Paris. Crossed that evening to Folkestone, a most lovely passage; next evening, Wednesday, to Carlyle's; next to Norwich,* to my parents, to rejoice their hearts

* An American friend who visited Mr. Forster, sen., about this period has given a graphic account of the Norwich home:

with the sight of their son, and home on the 23rd, the following Tuesday."

Returning home, he found Bradford in a much worse plight than that in which he had left it.

"Night drilling, pike buying, monster meetings, troops of soldiers, and of course a very bitter class feeling. But also, for there is no evil in this world without its compensation, a growing sense, among the upper classes that they must, for their own sakes, stop the starving of the labourer." "The struggle," he continues in a letter to Mr. Cooper, "may be more or less severe, but I look upon the suffrage as being as good as won; and the question I ask myself and you is, 'What are we to do with it when we get it?' I have my head,

"When I was in England, in the summer of 1847, I passed nearly a week at Earlham Road, and I can never forget the fatherly care and kindness which I received from dear William Forster and the kind hospitality from Anna Forster, who by the way alway called me 'the dear young friend from America whose name I cannot recollect.' I was at that time just entering upon manhood, but the picture of that dear old home, its master and its mistress, its stout manservant (a well grown lad), with his oft-recurring message of 'Beggars at the gate, master,' the sleek, comfortable, self-willed pony, and the birds who came in such numbers to drink from the basins placed on the lawn—a little garden for their special use—all these things I say, after the lapse of more than thirty years, are as clearly and distinctly before me as though it were but yesterday that I really saw them. I never met their son, although there now lies before me a little card on which dear William Forster had written in his own hand, when I was about to visit the north of England, 'At Apperley Bridge Station, about half way between Leeds and Bradford, ask for William Edward Forster, half a mile from station.'"

and I hope my heart, full of this question of organization of labour; but I confess, as yet, I see but very darkly. Have you any plan? All French brains are now trying to solve the problem, but I look for little help from them, they are so superficial. As to the Communist doctrine of not paying a man in proportion to his work, that *must* be wrong, and how far the principle of association accords with human nature, I am as yet at a loss to determine. The worst of all Socialist plans I have seen is that all have within them, more or less concealed, a damning desire to shirk work. Neither you nor I must be ever discouraged by abuse from either *ouvrier* or *bourgeois*. I am prepared for my full share from both, and all parties, and care little about it, so long as my own conscience does not agree with my assailants."

He was not in error in anticipating attacks from those who looked upon the political principles he was avowing with dislike and even with dread. Writing to his friend Barclay Fox, on May 26th, he says :—

"I had a very bothersome note from —— yesterday, telling me he is discouraged by the political line I had thought proper lately to pursue, and proceeding as follows :—'In thy speeches thou hast, in my opinion, made use of words and sentiments calculated to mislead thy hearers, and of exciting in them a spirit of dissatisfaction, and disunity with other members of the community. I

also am of opinion that some of thy expressions are absolutely untrue. This, together with thy late trip to France, has a good deal shaken my confidence in thee as a prudent discreet man of business.' The upshot of all which is, that he expresses uneasiness about the money lent me. To this I have replied, 'That the people here regarding me as their friend, I was compelled to speak, which I have done conscientiously, in the way I thought most likely to preserve order; that I believed I had helped to keep order, and that I had been throughout backed by several of our leading Friends and our mayor, who was allowed to be one of our first men of business, and that my trip to Paris was no ways political, but merely a holiday excursion. . . .' I find the state of the town most alarming; the physical forcists have gained a strength in my absence which I almost think I could have prevented. Large numbers of men are armed and drilling nightly, and there is of course much fear and suspicion, and a bitter class feeling."

He pursued his own course, in spite of this communication from one of those who had advanced capital when he entered upon business. Three days after writing the above letter he notes in his diary:—

"We had a slight Chartist fray here. The soldiers, of whom there are nearly a thousand in the town, were called out to help the specials to

arrest some drillers. There were some stones thrown and heads broken, but not mine, the stones flying over my head. All the inconvenience to me was patrolling to four in the morning and being hooted by one party and abused by the other, Joshua Pollard attributing the row to me; but as my own conscience is clear, I care not for that. My course is plain enough: to help the people to obtain peaceably their due, use all possible efforts to put down the rascals who mislead them and fatten on their misery, and above all to strive all in my power to rescue them from starvation."

The reference which he makes in the foregoing passage to his unpopularity with both sides refers only to a passing ebullition of excited feeling on the part of the working men engaged in the agitation. They clung to him loyally, not only then but for long afterwards. Yet the intense admiration which he had evoked by his open sympathy with their just demands was not stimulated by any want of frankness on his part in combating what he believed to be their errors. About this period a movement was set on foot amongst the Chartists of Bradford to procure as a candidate for the representation of the borough a notorious Chartist in London, whose name was identified not only with the most advanced and indeed revolutionary political opinions, but with certain romances of a distinctly objectionable character. The movement was supported with enthusiasm by many working

men, and a meeting was called to consider the desirableness of immediately inviting this person to come forward. Mr. Forster went to the meeting armed with the objectionable book of which the proposed candidate was the author, and in spite of the protests uttered by many present he insisted upon reading to them from the work a series of extracts which sufficiently indicated the character of the writer. He appealed to them earnestly to say whether they thought that a profligate, whatever his political views might be, was fit to represent honest men, and the impression which he made upon them was so great that the proposed candidature was forthwith abandoned.

In April, 1849, Forster re-visited Ireland. He did so in part to renew his acquaintance with the friends whom he had made during the former year, but chiefly that he might join Mr. Carlyle, who was then making his memorable journey through the country. Carlyle was in the company of Mr. Duffy, and Forster used to tell how when he reached Castlebar, where his friends were staying, his inquiries after them excited the suspicions of the guard of the train, who took a patriotic interest in Mr. Duffy's welfare, and who, fearing that the Englishman might be in the service of the police, showed a strong desire to put him out of the way. He found the country in a state of miserable disorganization. "Thanks to the Poor Law, no famine; but the cabins unroofed, the tenants in the work-

house, or underground, or emigrated; the landlords many of them ran away or hiding in houses for fear of bailiffs." A visit which he paid to two hundred and fifty families ejected from their holdings on the estate of Sir Roger Palmer deserves notice.

"Their cabins," he says, "were on the lands of a middle man, a namesake of Sir Roger's, and they say the probable heir to his large estates; a man who had been in the receipt of some £1200 or £1300 a year, but now in the most abject poverty. A good house with beautiful grounds and furniture all swept away. I have rarely seen anything more touching than his wife, an elegant, sweet-looking lady, with six fine children, who was striving with her hopeful looks to keep her husband from utter distraction, teaching her children herself, and finding it, I believe, hard work to feed them. I went over the Ballina Workhouse, which is in most excellent management, but fearfully full, and it is hard to say which is the most pitiable, the sight we saw of the men hiding in their houses, or this of their being cooped up in hopeless, listless idleness."

A few days later he and Carlyle were the guests of Lord George Hill at Ballyan.

"I doubt," he says, "whether a man could be found more possessed with a sense of duty and active benevolence than Lord George, and yet with a stern resolve and patient determination, which

no difficulty can daunt or tire. The tone and the manner of fatherly love with which he spoke in sympathy and encouragement to every one he met, knowing the names and circumstances of every cottier, were most beautiful to witness. Any chance, however, of his driving industry into the present generation of his tenantry seems but hopeless. Everything in his house is very complete, and there is the elegance of high breeding beaming over a most well-ordered household; but the utmost simplicity, not to say economy, which I fear his benevolence compels him to exercise. Breakfast at eight, dinner at one, and the like. His effectiveness, his happy blending of love and justice, and his utter absence of all cant, make him a man after Carlyle's heart, and he is in raptures with him. I am glad he should meet so good a specimen of the high evangelical school."

Another visit to Paris followed the trip to Ireland, and he took with him as his companion Mr. Thomas Cooper. Then came hard work at Bradford, not merely in business, but in performance of his duties as a guardian. The cholera was very bad in the town, and he had much to do with the work of providing doctors and nurses and coffins for the victims. In company with his friend, the Rev. W. Black, and others, he did not hesitate in the discharge of this duty to visit the patients in their houses, and it was in no small measure owing to his energy that the disease,

which had raged with great violence in some of the neighbouring towns, was beaten off.

The disturbing elements which surrounded his outward life, as well as the life of the nation at this time, had their counterpart within his breast. The year 1848 was marked by a spiritual, as well as by a political crisis in his history. His intimacy with Carlyle, Emerson, Sterling, and others, was bearing its natural fruit, in leading him to study anew, and from a fresh standpoint, the great problems of existence. All his sympathies, the love of his whole heart indeed, were on the side of faith. The boy who had listened with undoubting reverence to the earnest pleading of Stephen Grellet, had developed into a man who believed that in the Christian religion was to be found the supreme moral and spiritual power, both over individual souls, and over the world at large, and in this belief he never wavered. But his eager and inquiring mind could not remain torpid or quiescent, whilst in that atmosphere of intellectual activity which he now breathed, and during this year, 1848, he may be said to have passed through the storm and stress period of his life. It was a spiritual crisis such as comes to every thinking man at one time or another.

A friend who knew him intimately at that period, writing of his recollections of their intercourse, says, "He never held back—it was itself no slight test of the reality of his friendship—the

disturbance that had come to his faith; and I noted, and it was the greatest consolation as I thought of his fine soul detached from the safe moorings of a steadfast faith, that his doubts and difficulties were ever expressed in words of regret for what he confessed to be a great loss." Whatever indeed might be his intellectual difficulties, his heart clung to the faith he had learned from the lips of his father, and throughout the remainder of his life all that was best in him was drawn out by his deep reverence for religion. Still the fact must be noted, that while he was contending with all the outward perplexities associated with his political convictions, he was also engaged in a spiritual and intellectual conflict not less severe.

It was whilst he was suffering from these perplexities, that he had the pleasure of receiving a visit from Emerson, in whose philosophical writings he had felt the deepest interest, and whose influence could hardly fail to make itself felt in the formation of his opinions. "He—Emerson—decidedly improves upon acquaintance—is really social, and both willing and able to talk on all subjects, and what is far more fascinating, to listen. I was amused with his description of the New England transcendental clique, wherein intellectual and æsthetic culture appears to have been carried to a high point. I tried to discover whether the absence of any outward expression of religious faith had sapped morality, but I could

not discover that it had. Still, that proves nothing either way, as the stamp left by Puritanism is not yet obliterated. What I want to discover with these people is—first, do they resist temptation? Secondly, if so, how—by what help, or by what power?

"It strikes me that Emerson's influence—for *power* is not a word for him—arises from clearness of view, rather than depth of insight, combined with an honest love of truth, and most perfect independence of thought. He has a pair of good keen eyes, relies on them only, and tells you exactly what he sees. He is silently dogmatical; does not intrude his views, or bear down yours, but lets you see that your opposition has little weight with him; that, in fact, all opposition is a matter of much indifference. Altogether he seems a man whose first impression disappoints, but who improves on you as you know him, till at last he pretty well comes up to your previous estimate."

His father came to visit him shortly after he had entertained Emerson, and Forster seems to have been struck afresh by the strong points in his character. Referring to his father's visit, he says, "I have been vastly impressed with his liberality of thought and feeling, and very much struck with the way in which his heart and head appear to be occupied with plans for the temporal good of his fellow-creatures, as though this life must be looked

after before the other. Almost all his objects—care of the poor, hospitals, soup kitchens, sanitary improvements, and the like, and even education, peace, anti-slavery, and other such agitations—bear quite as much on the condition of the body as the soul; as though he now thought his duty to be rather to bring about the results of Christianity, than to preach its doctrines. Possibly, however, his tone and conversation may give me this impression on account of his awful reverence for religion, as though it was almost profanity to talk thereof."

Mr. Forster was no self-centred man. "He fought his doubts and gathered strength." Like many another who has passed through the same experience, he found that the problems of life, as they affected those who surrounded him, were still more urgent in their demand for consideration, than those problems which affected himself alone. We have seen how deeply he had been impressed by the social and political movement in France, which the year had witnessed, and we have seen also that, at this period of his career, he had a strong leaning towards the better side of Socialism, seeing, as he believed, in some form of State help a remedy for those social ills which had led the working classes of this country into Chartism, and the working classes of other countries into revolution. Accordingly, in October, 1848, he made a deep impression on the mind of Bradford by

three lectures on "Pauperism, and its proposed Remedies," which he delivered at the Mechanics Institute. His audience, we are told, was chiefly composed of men of the working classes, many of them Chartists, and his theme was that which Carlyle had tersely expressed as the "condition of England question."

In his own characteristic fashion, Forster, in the course of these lectures, discussed with something like judicial impartiality, the *pros* and *cons* of theories with which he himself was wholly unable to sympathise. He took his hearers into his confidence, as it were, and thought aloud in their presence, regarding such subjects as Communism, St. Simonism, and competition. His first lecture may be summed up as a protest against that *laissez faire* doctrine which Carlyle had condemned so strongly: his second was an exposition of the truths of political economy, chiefly those set forth by John Stuart Mill, and the moral to which they pointed; whilst the third was a consideration of the practical question, "What can Government properly do to raise the standard of comfort among the masses of the people and to lessen pauperism?"

It is not necessary now to give at any great length theories, some of which were abandoned by Mr. Forster himself in later years; yet his opinions at this stage are interesting as denoting his position with regard to one of the great standing problems

of our time. His lecture which was full of graphic illustrations (as, for example, when he told his hearers how he had gone to see in Paris Louis Blanc's tailors' shop, much desiring to possess a pair of Communist trousers, but on seeing the work turned out, felt that he must go elsewhere to obtain that which he required), ended with certain direct recommendations. The first was for the fuller employment of paupers: "In order that this should be carried out it was necessary that we should have a new poor law. Our present poor law was conducted on the Communist principle, and taught men to shirk work. The test work was no work, it was a mere test of destitution, putting men to an employment which was purposely made uncomfortable in order that they might be frightened from applying for relief. He would abolish this Communist system of pauperism, and replace it by a system which should pay men according to their work. Instead of shutting men up in union houses, he would put them on farms with spades in their hands, and then tell them to work or want. No doubt there were difficulties in the way; but it was better to try an experiment in spade husbandry than bury our money in a hole. When he knew that farms could be got, that spades could be bought, and that there were men praying to use these spades whilst money was being wasted which would pay for their using them, he could not believe that it was impossible to get that money

and those spades and those men together and put them upon this work. Were there no other means for the extinction of poverty? Such means were to be found in colonization for example. No man believed more firmly than himself that it would be an injustice to force any one of our fellow-citizens, because he was poor, to exile himself from his native land. But if a man wished to go, and had no means of going, the Government were bound to help him; first, because it was their interest to do so; and, secondly, because it was their duty. Another aid in the extinction of poverty was the lightening of the burden upon the labourer and a fresh arrangement of taxation. Others would be found in all spurs to agricultural improvement, everything which would increase the supply of food by increased facilities of production and communication, and those political and social reforms which, by giving freedom in land and allowing capital to be turned upon it, would increase the supply of food without the unfairness and hindrance of game preserves or entail laws and political landlords, who refuse leases and prefer to take their rents in votes as well as money. But although much might thus be done by changes in our law and our social systems, a grave duty was imposed upon workmen themselves, for much of their misery was of their own causing, owing to their want of self-denial and self-control. Knowledge was wanted, and it was the duty of the

Government to teach them. Unfortunately the public belief seemed to be that if the State were to teach it would also preach and thrust religious dogmas of its own upon the children whom it gathered into schools. 'What right have you to tax me for the purpose of educating other people's children?' was a question continually being asked. To that question he replied that it was better to tax a country for a good than for an evil. By suffering ignorance to exist we were leading hundreds of our working population to ruin. Private efforts were inadequate to the task of education; it was the duty of the State to provide instruction for the mind as well as food for the body, because the State was able to do it most effectually."

Before sitting down, the lecturer drew attention to another question which stood in the way of all our efforts to raise England from her pauperism—the question of the misery of Ireland. "The only way to benefit Ireland was to make it a home instead of a prison, and he saw no better way to mend this condition than by dealing the land out in small allotments."

Altogether this course of lectures form a valuable declaration of Mr. Forster's views, whilst the closing passage, which is abridged above from a contemporary report, has a peculiar significance when viewed in the light of the lecturer's subsequent career. The report from which the above

passages have been quoted states that at the close of the lecture Mr. Hole, of Leeds, rose for the purpose of correcting one or two misrepresentations of the lecturer in regard to Communism. A communication from Mr. Hole lies before me, and it states how at the close of the debate, in which he had appeared as the opponent of the opinions held by the lecturer, Mr. Forster took him home with him to his house at Rawdon.

"Although I had opposed him, he seemed to like me none the worse," says Mr. Hole, "and I noticed this peculiarity of his through all his after career; namely, that he was pre-eminently fair and friendly to his opponents. After this I frequently visited his house. His table was a veritable Noah's Ark. All sorts of notabilities in politics and religion were met together there of the most opposite views to his own and to each other's."

The lectures themselves excited more than passing observation and interest. A special meeting was held in the Mechanics' Institute to discuss Mr. Forster's theories, and though many were found who opposed him, it is evident from the contemporary records that from that time forward he became increasingly prominent as one of the political leaders of the West Riding. These lectures, combined with the reputation which he had acquired in Yorkshire by his known association with some of the most advanced minds of the time,

his experiences in Ireland, and his visit to Paris, secured for him many invitations to lecture in different towns in the neighbourhood of his own home, and his figure became a familiar one on the public platforms of that part of the West Riding. "I have taken quite a passion for talking," he writes to one of his friends, and he adds, "I talk my lectures, not read them." To this method he clung throughout his whole career, and it cannot be doubted that much of the force with which his sentiments were conveyed to those who had heard him, was due to the directness and simplicity of his manner and language. Indeed, to the last, in all his speeches the familiar colloquial element was invariably present and was not seldom predominant.

It was about this time, whilst he was grappling with these hard social problems, that he wrote as follows to one of his friends in Ireland, a lady who had just lost a near and dear relative:

"I was greatly shocked to hear of the heavy affliction which has come upon you at last so suddenly. She looked so sweet, so heaven-like, when I saw her in the carriage, that I felt that earth had little hold over her, and it would have been cruel to her, dear creature, to bind her to it, even could we have done so. But it is a heavy blow to all who knew her. I feel myself as though in truth a link was gone in the chain of friends which bind my heart to life, and to you it is a

terrible loss, to *you* especially. I am anxious to know how you all are. You must not grieve overmuch; but it is no use saying you *must* not. Grief is better expressed than repressed, and when grief overwhelms us there is little comfort in the truth, which after all is a truth, that life's peace is seldom gained until its pleasures and joys have been lost. But words are of no use in a case like this, and I will not weary you with them."

It is difficult in the story of the life of a public man to bring into its due prominence those private characteristics which are, after all, dearer to such a man's friends than the power which he displays or the fame which he wins; but it would be a most false and imperfect portraiture of Mr. Forster which revealed nothing of that tenderness of heart which made him the most sympathetic of friends, sympathetic when he had to rejoice with those who did rejoice; but infinitely more sympathetic and tender when his heart was moved by the sorrows of those around him.

CHAPTER VIII.

MARRIAGE, AND LIFE AT BURLEY.

If the closing years of the third decade of Forster's life proved to be his period of storm and stress, the following ten years were those which witnessed his most rapid growth in preparation for the service of his country. They are years full of incident and of interest; but it is impossible, without carrying this narrative far beyond reasonable limits, to dwell upon them in detail. His private life during this period underwent the happiest of changes, by his marriage with Jane Arnold, the daughter of Dr. Arnold, of Rugby.

It is obviously impossible for the biographer to dwell upon Mr. Forster's married life. Yet all who had the privilege of knowing him intimately, can bear their testimony to the fact that Mr. Forster himself was never weary of acknowledging his indebtedness to the wife whom he cherished with a chivalrous reverence, not too common in the present age, and hardly to have been expected in his case, by those who judged him merely by his outward characteristics. The union was one

which added immensely, not to his happiness only, but to the extent of his power of serving others. His admission into a family of such intellectual distinction as that of Dr. Arnold insensibly widened his sympathies, and brought his mind into contact with ideas of which he had known comparatively little before.

Not that it is to be supposed that association with this new circle of friends in any degree weakened the principles which he had held up to the time of his marriage, and which were founded upon convictions of the most serious character. To those principles he clung as firmly as ever. But at the same time the new ideas and the new influences which were now brought to bear upon him had their inevitable result in widening his sympathies and modifying his judgments. A friend of the Arnolds, who had never seen Mr. Forster, and knew him only by his public reputation at this time, drew from the sources of information at her command the following somewhat strikingly accurate picture of him:—

"I have been gleaning information gradually about Mr. Forster, but still want much more to make the picture perfect. . . . I think I will give you a bit of my imperfect picture to amuse you. A man naturally of great power of mind, to a great degree self-educated, frightened of nothing, willing to go on boldly and take the consequences of all his thoughts, to a degree that few people will

sympathize with. A man whom every one will respect, even if they abuse him; very likely to become a great man in the country and the leader of the Radical party, if he is not too superior to them to be able to find sufficient points of sympathy with them to enable them to work together. Join this with strong affections and practical habits, and you have a bit of my imperfect picture."

Almost the first result of his marriage was his separation from the Society of Friends, with which his ancestors had been so long connected. This, however, was not voluntary on his part. It was due to the fact that mixed marriages were at that time visited with the penalty of expulsion from the society. A deputation from the meeting at Rawdon visited Mr. Forster, when it became known that he was about to marry the daughter of a clergyman of the Church of England. The good Friends composing it solemnly warned him against the step he was about to take, and implored him to reconsider his decision. It need hardly be said that the emissaries of the society had no idea that they would succeed in their mission. They had, however, to discharge the duty imposed upon them by the ordinances of their body. Having failed in their attempt to dissuade Mr. Forster from his intended marriage, they reminded him of the fact that such a marriage would entail his expulsion from the society, and then, their task being completed, heartily con-

gratulated him, as private friends, upon the approaching termination of his bachelor life, and his happiness in having secured a partner in every way so eligible. Years afterwards, Mr. Forster, having to reply to a deputation of Quakers, who had waited upon him in his ministerial capacity, said, "Your people turned me out of the society for doing the best thing I ever did in my life." He still, however, attended meetings of the society, and retained the deepest interest in all that affected the welfare of its members. In a letter written on the Sunday evening immediately before his marriage, he says:

"I have just come from evening meeting, a silent, and to me a somewhat solemn leave-taking of my Quakerism, and yet there is much, very much of Quakerism that will cling to me to my dying day, and on the whole I am glad that the formal bond which tied me to it is severed."

It was long before his marriage—indeed, very soon after he went to Bradford—that he gave up the peculiar Quaker dress. He did this in a manner which illustrates the energy and thoroughness with which he carried out any line of action upon which he had determined. Many of the Friends around him were modifying their peculiar dress, creeping out of it by inches, as though they were in the hope that the change from the garb of Fox to that of the ordinary man of the world would hardly be noticed by their acquaintances.

Forster did not adopt this course; but, having determined to abandon the dress of his youth, he changed his appearance in a single hour, and astonished his friends by suddenly presenting himself before them attired in garments of the latest and most irreproachable fashion.

It was in the summer of 1850 that Mr. Forster's marriage with Miss Arnold took place. At that time she was in very delicate health, and their honeymoon was necessarily a brief one. One of his wife's brothers, Mr. William D. Arnold, held an appointment as Director of Public Instruction in India. There was something in his character which specially drew forth towards him Forster's affection and esteem, and in course of time they became the warmest of friends. It was whilst he was on his wedding journey with his wife, that Forster addressed the following letter to his brother-in-law:—

To Mr. W. D. Arnold.

"Minehead, August, 1850.

"My dear William,

"We are in the quietest of inns, in the cleanest of towns—a small fishing-port, opened up into a watering-place, lying snug between the Quantock Hills and the Bristol Channel. It is new scenery to ——, and she enjoys it greatly, and she is, I do think, better to-day than I have seen her before or since her illness, and I am very sanguine

that the journeying and the sea breezes will strengthen her greatly. . . . I don't know whether by this time a small packet has reached you from us. . . . We stuffed in a few books, among others a small pamphlet of mine, in defence of an old Quaker worthy, against Macaulay's charges in his history, which I suppose you have read. On the whole it has been well received by the press—thanks to the hero's merits, not the advocate's—but I thought interest for your sister might make you curious enough about her husband to read it. Carlyle's pamphlets will amuse you. They have had an immense reading, but probably less effect than almost any of his writings. They are so one-sided in their stern, almost lurid gloom and preference of the past to the present; and besides, it is too late now to try to whip the world into good manners. It has grown past the flogging age, and all the movement got by the beneficent whip nowadays is, thanks to the pig principle within us, a retrograde movement. Still, the power of his sincerity is great, and he wields his whip sincerely enough, as I saw plainly this time last year, when travelling with him in Ireland. I see *you* are rather Carlylish in India. I can scarcely wonder at it, for offences must abound. Nevertheless, I sometimes long for a year in India. It would be refreshing and most interesting, and somewhat useful too, I fancy, to correct the reforming, changing, destroying, venturous spirit, fostered

by these days of go-ahead speculations, by the solemn changeless conservatism of the gorgeous golden East. Besides, I should travel along on a reforming hobby of my own. . . . The point which seems to me most immediately noteworthy is the taxation, the mode of raising the revenue, which, if rumour lies not, is a grievous oppression, weighing down the mass of poor cultivators by an equal intolerable burden, more intolerable even than the capricious injustice of the old despots, because more systematic, and so making the very goodness of our government, which is its strength and order and discipline, its worst evil. How then the revenue is raised and how it can be with the least suffering to the poor man, is the first question I should ask myself in India; and then another question, much deeper and harder and wider to solve, but even more interesting—how can the hidden resources of the Indian mind be developed? How can the Indian be put on his legs, if not on the same platform with ourselves? In what formula must we express to him the lesson of the day, which is Excelsior!—in a word, how can the Indian be taught self-government?"

At the close of their wedding journey, husband and wife took up their abode at Rawdon, where they spent eighteen happy months in a place which must always be associated with the first marked development of Mr. Forster's career as a public

man. Some business anxieties, however, began about this time to weigh upon him, and eventually led to his removal from Rawdon to Burley, Wharfedale. He and his partner, Mr. Fison, had acquired an old cotton mill at Burley, for the purpose of converting it into a worsted manufactory. Capital was needed in order to complete the purchase and to make the necessary improvements in the property of which they had become possessed. Mr. Forster found it necessary to reduce the establishment he had maintained at Rawdon, whilst, for the purpose of maintaining a closer supervision over the business, he determined to live near the mill. Accordingly, he built the little house called Wharfeside, on the banks of the Wharfe river, which he continued to occupy down to the time of his death. It is a modest structure, chiefly noticeable for the romantic beauty of its situation and for the taste and care which have been lavished upon the grounds surrounding it. The windows of the library, which was the apartment chiefly used by Mr. Forster during his lifetime, command a view of a lovely stretch of the river Wharfe, which glides within a few feet of the house itself.

A word must be said in passing regarding this particular apartment in the house, for it was the room which during the remainder of his life was that most closely associated with its owner. Nay, it may be said to have been associated with

him even before it came into existence, for it was, as nearly as possible, a reproduction of his library at Rawdon. The bookcases which still line the walls at Wharfeside were those which were made for him when he went to Rawdon; the very window-curtains are those which he bought to complete the furniture of his bachelor abode. Homely comfort is the prevailing characteristic of the modest room, though the volumes which fill the shelves give evidence of the fact that the master of the house was not an ordinary man. One noticeable feature of the apartment deserves remark. There is no suggestion of the solitude of the study about it. It bears its own character stamped plainly upon it. The visitor can see at once that it is not merely a library, but the room in which the master of the house and his family lived. The simplicity of Forster's personal tastes and habits are represented by the plainness of the furniture, the absence of anything pretentious; but at the same time the social side of the man is displayed in the fact that, even when sitting among his books and studying the problems, social and political, which he was ever striving to solve, he evidently loved to have those dear to him around him. The library was always the centre of attraction at Wharfeside. Here Forster wrote at one table, his wife writing at another. Here he read and studied, ever and anon pausing in his reading to debate with those around him

some knotty point raised by the author whom he was perusing. Here he entertained his friends with that fresh and vigorous talk, full of picturesque and striking phrases, full too of a healthy-humour and a broad geniality and human sympathy, the memory of which must be treasured by all who knew him. It was here in his later days, when he was in the midst of the battle of life, and suffering most severely from the buffetings of fortune, that he showed to those around him that his temper had not been soured, nor his sympathies narrowed or hardened by his experiences in public life. A thousand bright and happy memories cluster around this library at Wharfeside, and of each the master of the house seems to be the central figure. Even now, to those who knew him, the room seems to be pervaded by his presence. There is his favourite chair, still standing in the old place by the fireside; there are the books which he loved looking down with friendly aspect upon us; there is his despatch-box by his writing-table; above all, there is the same lovely stretch of the river, opening up from the window a vista of peaceful beauty not easily to be matched. From every room in the house, indeed, views of remarkable picturesqueness are to be obtained. The river, the woods, the green fields of Wharfedale, and the heather-clad hills beyond, combine in pictures of singular and romantic beauty.

"Wharfeside," writes his daughter, Mrs. Robert Vere O'Brien, "and the family life within it were like a body and mind, the one moulding and transforming the other, so close was the connection between the house and its occupants. The modest gabled house, with its deep porch and overhanging eaves, never lost the character first impressed upon it in the days when the four walls rose above the almost treeless field in which it stood, and when Mr. and Mrs. Forster used to drive over from Rawdon to watch the progress of their new home.

"But if Wharfeside did not change, it certainly grew, though by slow and gradual degrees, like the sheltering trees and shrubberies round it, and the creepers on its walls. A bay window was thrown out here, a room was built on there, an additional gable introduced in another place, each new addition fitted into the original fabric by the ingenious and sympathetic architect who had built the house, and who seemed endowed with a special gift for making these frequent and necessary alterations in such a way as to be as harmonious and imperceptible as possible. The bare field was speedily transformed into lawns, flower-beds, and shrubberies, each tree in which, we used to maintain, was known individually and personally to my father and mother, so deeply attached were they to these trees of their own planting.

"As the laying-out of the garden and grounds advanced, the belt of tall beeches crowning the

high river bank, and the few noble oak trees that had once seemed scattered aimlessly about the field, appeared to fall into their right place as the natural setting and shelter to the picturesque house which had grown up amongst them; and to the four children who came from India seven years later to their home on the Wharfe, to the ivy-covered house embosomed in trees, standing in a garden bright with flowers and smooth-shaven green lawns, the original Wharfeside, as it was described to them, seemed as difficult to picture in imagination as the marshes of Westminster before London was built.

"But from first to last the real core and nucleus of Wharfeside, the centre round which everything seemed to have formed, was the library. This room was the connecting link between my father's old surroundings and his new, for its exact proportions and size, the low-raftered ceiling, the dark mahogany bookcases that lined the walls, were copied, or had been transported bodily from his library at Rawdon, and the heavy red velvet curtains drawn every night across the wide window that filled up nearly the whole of one wall, were a purchase of his bachelor days of which he was not unreasonably proud. This library was *the* room of the house. Wharfeside never possessed a drawing-room, properly so called. From the first it was in the library that my mother's sofa, her writing-table, her flowers and books were

established, and this room was the scene of that active joint life, that perfect companionship in all their plans, occupations, and interests, which began with those early years of quiet work at Wharfeside.

"In later times the library was still the family room, as might have been seen by the various tokens of feminine, not to say juvenile, occupations intruding amongst the piles of newspapers, the letters, Blue books, and despatch boxes, which might well have claimed a monopoly of right to the limited space available in the small library, now the workroom of a busy public man.

"But so long as the sanctity of his writing-table in the corner was respected, my father would cheerfully tolerate this joint occupation of what might naturally have been considered his special room, and the pleasant book-lined library, with its outlook over river and meadow and distant moor, was still the common resort of the family. Nor would even the dogs and the Persian cat ever consent to forego their right of free entry to this favourite room at all times and seasons, a right which was always freely admitted by their master. Often have I seen him, when in the thick of preparing for some important speech, go suddenly to open the door in obedience to the summons of an impatient colley dog whining for admittance. Yarrow would then shuffle himself across the room to his accustomed corner, curl himself round, and

only emerge when the time came for his master to break off a long morning's work to take a short stroll before post time, and on these occasions Yarrow's company was always indispensable."

It was in February, 1852, that the house was finished, and that Mr. and Mrs. Forster removed to it from Rawdon. The Wharfedale valley has been made famous in art by the brush of Turner. All who know it will agree that there are few more beautiful dales in Yorkshire, or indeed in England. Mr. Forster's new home, though within easy reach of Bradford and Leeds, was in the very midst of the most beautiful scenery of the valley. As at Rawdon, so at Burley, Mr. Forster's house became the centre to which thoughtful men of very different ranks and classes were constantly drawn. Any one engaged in endeavouring to effect a social or political reform was certain to find a hearty welcome from the owner of Wharfeside, and that welcome was all the warmer if the person to whom it was extended was one who had suffered for the truth's sake. Escaped slaves from the United States, ex-Chartist prisoners, men who were tabooed by society because they were believed to be heterodox on questions of social polity or religious faith, and ultra-Radicals, who were denounced by their neighbours as revolutionists, found hospitable shelter beneath his roof. But whilst exercising this varied hospitality, Mr. Forster continued to devote himself with great

energy to his business. He and Mr. Fison had made a bold experiment in transplanting their works from Bradford to Burley, and in order that their action might be justified by its results, the greatest care was needed. Happily, the experiment was completely successful. Business life at Burley was not quite the same thing as at Bradford. The place was a village, and not a bustling town. It followed that Forster and his partner naturally took the chief places in the little community, and thus it came about that they were brought into positions nearly akin to that of the many-acred country squire. They were not merely employers of labour, they were the friends of the people among whom they lived. The villagers of Burley looked to them to take the lead in all questions which affected the welfare of the place. It need hardly be said that Mr. Forster and Mr. Fison continued to take the deepest interest in their workpeople.

Writing to her mother, in November, 1850, Mrs. Forster tells of one of the first meetings between her husband and the industrial community of which he was now the head: "William is gone to Bradford this evening to attend an education meeting, and as I must not expect him back till eleven or twelve o'clock, I shall have time to give you an account of our meeting at Burley last night, which was very interesting. It was intended partly to celebrate the getting to work at

the new mills, and partly the opening of a large room to serve the purposes of reading and concert and class room. It will certainly be a very convenient room for the purpose, and looked very well last night, when it was well lighted with gas and filled with more than five hundred people, chiefly, of course, belonging to the mill. Dearest William took the opportunity of explaining to them all the plans which have been formed for their comfort and benefit. The cooking apparatus has been brought from Bradford, and the library is to be immediately opened. Mr. Fison and William engage also to keep a savings bank for the workpeople, and to receive any sums, from sixpence up to £25, giving ten per cent. interest up to £5, and five per cent. afterwards. He explained all this to them, and urged shortly the wisdom and duty of saving whilst times were still good. He also told them about the reading room, and that the large room would be open two evenings in the week for men's classes, two evenings for girls' classes (as soon as a matron can be found to superintend them), and the remaining two evenings for the musicians to practise."

Hardly anywhere in England, indeed, could an industrial community be found in which the mutual confidence between masters and servants was greater than at Burley. Mr. Forster used to be proud of the fact that his own workpeople were not afraid to tell him how much money they

were worth. They freely put their money into a savings bank which he established and managed for them. In all their troubles they came to him, as to their best friend, and sympathy and advice, not to speak of more substantial assistance, were never wanting on his part when they were needed. It was said, at the time of his death, that no one could really know him who did not know the character of his relations with his own people in Wharfedale. Through storm and shine, in all the years of his life from 1852 onwards, he was at least certain of the love and the confidence of his friends at Burley.

A vivid idea of his relations with the working-men of the district is afforded by the sketch of Forster about this period with which I have been favoured by Mr. J. M. Ludlow. That gentleman writes as follows:—

"I knew William Forster by sight long before I had spoken to him, or even knew his name. In the year 1838 or 1839, an uncle of mine, the late Mr. F. Brown, founded the first organization for the benefit of India, the 'British India Society.' I sympathized with him, and in some small degree helped him. The committee of the society had several 'Friends' upon it (the very starting-point of the society was an address delivered by my uncle in the Friends' great meeting-house in Bishopsgate Street), including, I think, two of the Forsters. I used always to attend the public

meetings of the society in London, and when either of the Forsters who were on the committee were present, used generally to see with them a very long lad, with a long, hard-featured face, who, I was once told, was the nephew of the Mr. Forster present. Although, in fact, my senior by three years, he was then quite beardless, whilst I was hirsute, so that he always looked the youngest person in the room.

"Years after, when I was editor of the *Christian Socialist* (1851), I took a 'co-operative tour,' chiefly on foot, through Lancashire and Yorkshire, in search of the then thinly scattered co-operative societies, in company, during part of the time, with T. Hughes. I had been strongly recommended, I think by my dear friend and then colleague Lloyd Jones, to call on Mr. Forster, a manufacturer of Bradford, who had expressed some sympathy with the co-operative movement. My desire to know him was further stimulated by the high terms in which I found working-men at Bradford speak of him—'the only mill-owner,' as I stated in the published notes of my tour, whom at that time I had 'ever heard claimed by the working-men as a friend.' I called upon him accordingly, and at once recognized in him the lanky lad of the British India Society's meetings. He kindly asked me to dine and sleep at his house at Rawdon. We talked on till late at night, our conversation deepening as it went on. He was

then just entering into that Christian faith which afterwards so fully possessed him. He had had an article on Maurice's 'Theology' rejected by the *Westminster Review*, to which he had been hitherto a contributor, on the ground that it was too Christian. But he was still beset with much of that 'honest doubt' in which, as Tennyson tells us, there 'lives more faith' than 'in half the creeds.' Leaning his two elbows on the table so as to cover his face with his two bony hands—an attitude which, but for its angularity in him, reminded me entirely of Mr. Maurice in his moments of deepest thought and feeling—he began to pour out his soul to me, seeking help in his perplexities. I listened with a kind of awe, feeling how weak I was to help so strong a man. But God must have enabled me to say something worth his hearing, for at last, after a few minutes' silence, he threw up his head, and said, 'Thank you. You have given me some side-lights which will be of use to me. Now let us go to bed.' From that night I always looked upon William Forster as a friend.

"It is rather singular, however, that never since that first night of our acquaintance did we speak together again on those highest subjects of all which had drawn us closest to one another. If William Forster gained any help from me on that occasion, I also gained help from him. At the time I speak of, I had not recognized the

value of Trade Unionism from a social point of view; I saw nothing but co-operation as a means of benefiting the workers. He who had had in his early years of business a sharp fight with the Trade Unions knew better than I what they could do, and I remember his pregnant reply to a question of mine—'Do you think that a strike has ever either raised wages or prevented their being lowered?' 'No; *but the fear of a strike has.*' Such a testimony, from a man in his position, had very great weight with me, and I was all the more glad to have received it, when, a few months later, the occurrence of the great engineers' strike and lock-out of 1852, and the application of the leaders of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers to the Council of the Society for Promoting Working Men's Associations, forced the subject of Trade Unionism directly upon the attention of my friends and myself.

"I do not think I have any letters of William Forster's earlier than of the latter part of 1852. But, from the time of our meeting in the North, he used, when he came up to town, to call at the chambers, No. 3, Old Square, Lincoln's Inn, which I then occupied with T. Hughes, sometimes going into one room, sometimes into the other (but whenever possible all the three of us gathered together), and I remember, on one occasion when he rose to leave, his saying, with that peculiar chuckle of his, 'Well, for a set of revo-

lutionists, I must say you are the pleasantest ones I know!' Whilst we had many a friendly spar together, we looked upon him as a sort of outside ally in our co-operative campaigns, and it is to him that I referred in the third of a series of lectures on 'The Master Engineers and their Workmen,' delivered February 27th, 1852, in speaking of 'a mill-owner in the woollen trades . . . whom the working men all around love, and trust, and take pride in as a friend, and will have sooner or later for their representative in Parliament; who will gladly take the chair at co-operative meetings, and encourage attempts at co-operative production, however doubtful of their success—ay, and come up from Yorkshire on a fool's errand, to urge the Government to legalize co-operative associations.'"

Living in the country, Forster had full opportunity for gratifying that love of nature which had marked his character from boyhood. There was one particular, however, in which his life was very different from that of the average country gentleman. For sport, so called, he entertained something like a feeling of abhorrence. From his mother, as a boy, he had learned to detest anything in the nature of cruelty to dumb animals. As he grew older, this feeling seemed to grow stronger. Nothing appeared to rouse him to more intense indignation than any persecution of the animal creation. It followed that he refrained scrupulously from all field sports. He never

hunted; and though the heights of Wharfedale are crowned by great stretches of moorland, where the grouse find a congenial home, he never shot, save as a marksman in a volunteer competition. The Wharfe is one of the best trout streams in Yorkshire. But Mr. Forster never fished. It is said, indeed, that the only animal he ever killed was an old cat, whose sufferings he wished to terminate. Some of his friends still remember how anxiously he inquired of them as to the speediest and easiest mode of putting an end to its existence. It was not mere detestation of cruelty to animals that he felt, however. He had a positive affection for them of the strongest kind. The pets of his own household played almost as important a part in the domestic economy, as their human neighbours, and he was miserable if any of them were suffering. When the time came for him to exercise power as one of the ministers of the Crown, he used it with vigour on behalf of his dumb constituents, who had nothing but love to give him in return for the services which he rendered to them. He was able to do something to lighten the sufferings inflicted upon cattle in their transit by railway from town to town, and he did what he could to prevent the needless torture to animals by means of vivisection.

In the public work of Bradford, Mr. Forster, during the years immediately following his marriage, took a prominent part. He had become

chairman of the board of guardians, and he worked hard in the discharge of a task for which he was eminently suited. His position in the Liberal party in the town became stronger as time passed, and he was generally selected to move or second the Liberal candidates for parliamentary election. His lectures, of which mention has already been made, became more numerous and important, whilst practice in public speaking added greatly to his power of impromptu utterance. But although during this period he first became really prominent among the politicians in the north of England, it was not by speech, but by pen, that he made the greatest advance. In 1849, stung into action by the extreme acerbity with which Macaulay had attacked William Penn, he published that pamphlet, of which mention is made in the letter to Mr. W. D. Arnold, vindicating the character of Penn, one of the favourite heroes of the Society of Friends. The pamphlet had a marked success, and did much to mitigate the feeling which Macaulay's strictures upon Penn had occasioned. About the same time Forster wrote to the *Leader* newspaper a series of letters on the "Right to Work," which he pithily described as "a man's right to do his duty." They formed a vigorous indictment of the existing economic system, and led up to the writer's favourite conclusion, that it is the duty of the State to provide work for every member of the

community. It was not, however, until he settled at Wharfeside that he secured a position among the contributors to the *Westminster* and *Edinburgh Reviews*. His contributions to the *Westminster*, in particular, were of considerable importance. His first letter to the editor of that periodical was as follows:—

"DEAR SIR,

"Ever since I have seen your prospectus of the *New Westminster*, I have wished to become a contributor to it. Both your prospectus and your public tempting me. Are you full for your second number—viz., your April number? and if not, would you be disposed to choose one among the following subjects, on which you would try an article from me? When I say *try*, of course I mean try with your own eyes' judgment not with the public's; but I should hardly wish to write unless I knew that you were inclined to do that much.

"1. 'Quakerism: its History, Meaning, Purpose, and Prospects; including a sketch of how it came into the world, what it has done there, and what it has yet to do.' A book called 'Quakerism; or, the Story of my Life' (contemptible enough in itself), would be a peg to hang an article on, the more especially as the eagerness with which in many quarters it has been welcomed is somewhat noteworthy.

"2. 'Professor Maurice, not as a Socialist or Metaphysician, but as a Theologian;' a description of his position in the Church of England, which seems to me most new and important, as being that of the founder of a new school, which more than any other Church school, attempts to solve the questions of the age.

"3. 'Spencer's Social Statics;' criticising what seems to me a *reductio ad absurdum* of the *laissez faire* doctrine; at the same time acknowledging its great merits both as to style and matter.

"4. 'The Kaffir War; as throwing light on our relation with aborigines, whether savage or barbarous;' in which I should attempt to show that we must not abdicate the duty which our right as the strong and the wise gives us to rule the weak and the ignorant, as the philanthropists would wish, still less to misuse that right and turn it into a wrong, as has been our practice, nor to fulfil it by denying to them their rights, as would Carlyle. I have myself little choice about the subject, but possibly the first might suit me best, as I was obliged to study most of the writings of the early Quakers in writing my pamphlet in reply to Macaulay's charges against William Penn, and my Quaker education gives me an opportunity of knowing Quakerism which few have had, who have not at the same time a sectarian bias. In case you incline to receive an article, please let me know when it must be sent in. I suppose

you'll name an early day, as you must have time to substitute another in case you find it will not do. My first paper I should wish you to consider as a subscription to your undertaking."

It was in January, 1853, that his contributions to the *Westminster Review* first began to attract general attention, and the article which had this effect was one on the question of American slavery. Middle-aged men and women amongst us can still recall that wonderful uprising of the national conscience on the subject of slavery which followed the publication of "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Whatever critics may say of the literary merits of that book, and whatever charges of exaggeration may be brought against it by dispassionate authorities, the fact remains that this romance of negro life produced a deeper impression upon the minds of the people of England and New England than any other work of fiction which was ever issued from the press. Mrs. Beecher Stowe, by the tale written in the intervals of her attention to the domestic duties which fall to the lot of a poor Congregational minister's wife, had, in a few months, accomplished more than had been effected by all the wise, the learned, and the devoted men who for years had been endeavouring to awaken the conscience of the people of America, and to enlist the sympathies of the people of Great Britain on the subject of the abolition of slavery.

There is no need to say on which side Mr. Forster's sympathies lay in the controversy which now began to rage on both sides of the Atlantic. In England there were still people who affected to question our right to judge our kinsmen with regard to one of their domestic institutions. Forster was not one of these. We have seen him in boyhood eagerly rendering such assistance as he could to his uncle in his anti-slavery labours. He was delighted now with the effect produced by the publication of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and he did his utmost, by speech and pen, to deepen the impression which it had made upon the minds of his fellow-countrymen. "Does Uncle Tom speak the truth?" he asks, in his *Westminster Review* article. "This cry, which echoing from one side of the Atlantic to the other, has found its way from his cabin to the hearts of millions, is it in truth the plaint and the prayer of the sufferer; or is it not rather a cunningly devised fable, so cunning a device, that even when discovered it defies indignation? Is this 'life of the lowly' drawn from the life, or from the artist's imagination? America is the home of the Irish outcast, the workhouse of the English pauper, a workhouse in which he is sure of both room and work. Can it be, then, that within the bounds of that union they separate man and wife; not, indeed, as a condition of age or consequence of improvidence, but as the punishment of weakness, because the strong,

by the right of his might, claims the sinews of the husband, or perchance the charms of the wife? Surely in this hospitable region, to which hundreds daily fly from their miseries and mistakes, it cannot be the habit to hunt women because they fly from the ravisher, and mothers because they cling to their children, and strong men because they assert their manhood. . . . In a word, does Mrs. Stowe paint American slavery as it is, or does she not? Most of her readers, we imagine, have answered in the affirmative, almost before they have asked themselves the question: the 'yes' forced out of their beating hearts by her genius. But is this fair? The good name of a great nation is at stake, and surely it ought not to be blasted by a mere tale, told ever so wisely, until at least its statements have been weighed."

Forster went on, with that eloquence which was only drawn from him under the influence of deep feeling, to discuss the evidence for and against Mrs. Stowe, taking occasion in doing so to speak of the action of the *Times* and of his friend and teacher, Mr. Carlyle, with courageous frankness. He maintained the right of the negro to those privileges of manhood which, in this country as well as in America, many of our most eminent men were at that time united in denying to him. He quoted Blue books and pamphlets, letters, speeches, and reports from the Society of Friends, to show that it was no overcoloured

picture which Mrs. Stowe had painted; and, in conclusion, he asked, "How stand the chances of the slave? Law and force are against, but heart and eloquence and genius are for him, and they have a quick eye for the winning side. There are still speeches and sermons without number, and books not a few, against him. But what speeches, and what books! The only books he need care for are the ledgers of the planter, and his Northern creditor. . . . And now this wonderful 'Uncle Tom' is going through the length and breadth of the North; ay! and penetrating also into the South, forcing every one to hear his tale of woe and to ask himself first: 'Can these things be?' and then, 'How long shall they last?' And this question, 'How long?' is not one which men will be contented with asking *themselves*. Oh no! the time is at hand, we have faith to believe, when the citizens of the North will say to their compatriots of the South, 'We do not like this slave owning. You say it is your business; we will take care that it is not ours. If you will have laws which sanction robbery, and order torture, which permit rape, and connive at murder; if you will tear wives from their husbands, and children from their mothers; if you will let men sell their sons to the slave driver, and their daughters to the seducer; if you will make the ignorance of these negroes your excuse for enslaving them, and yet will keep them untaught, and punish those who try to teach them,—we, at least, will

not help you. We will no longer be either your slave catchers or their jailors: the soil which belongs to us both, shall be free; our common city shall be a city of refuge; the suppliants who come to us for succour shall not seek it in vain. Nay, further, you tell us to leave these men and women to your mercy, because they belong to you. We cannot do so; for they are bound to us, by the ties of country, which we cannot sever without their consent. The time was, when they were supposed to be not men, but things, chattels, or property; but now we have discovered they are men, ay, and our fellow-countrymen. We grant that it is your place, your duty, to do justice to them, and we will give you time to fill this place, and fulfil this duty; but if you will not do this duty, nor even acknowledge it to be a duty, if you will neither free these slaves, nor make any attempt to prepare them for freedom, we dare no longer deny the claim of their fellow-citizenship. And upon your heads be the consequences of this admission.'"

When these words were reprinted in the United States, it was not long before the secret of their authorship was revealed, and the Abolitionists knew that in the son of William Forster, the Quaker missionary, and the nephew of Thomas Fowell Buxton, the friend of the slave, they had found a new and valuable ally, whose zeal in the great cause which they had taken up was never

permitted for an instant to slacken, until the day when the United States was purged, by the terrible ordeal of blood and fire, of the reproach which had so long rested upon it.

Other contributions of his to the *Westminster Review* about this period were articles on "Kaffir Wars and Cape Policy," on "British Philanthropy and Jamaica Distress," "Strikes and Lock-outs," and "The Foreign Policy of the United States," whilst a powerful article on the "Autocracy of the Czars" was published in the *Edinburgh Review;* so by pen as well as by speech Forster, in the decade between 1850 and 1860, may be said to have come fully before the public, and to have taken his place among those who were most largely influencing the minds of their fellow-countrymen. With it all, he himself remained outside the circle of active politicians at this period. "I lead a very busy, though most quiet and settled and happy life," he wrote to one of his friends shortly after his marriage. His time was spent at his place of business, in the local committee-rooms at Bradford, where he was always ready to help any work that commended itself to his sympathies, and above all in his own home at Wharfeside, where in reading and in literary work he found congenial occupation, his constant adviser and companion being his wife.

His life at this period was distinguished chiefly by that "active quietude" of which he spoke in

some of his letters. Very busy he was, but it was not in the way most likely to attract the attention of the world. His lectures, his review articles, his local work in sanitary and educational matters, his eager intercourse with men who were engaged in work which interested him, all tended to bring him gradually nearer to the position which he had long marked out for himself, just as all tended to fit him to fill that position, when he attained it, worthily. But it seemed for the moment as though he was standing aside from the main currents of public life. He had ceased to excite remark by those ebullitions of youthful enthusiasm which in 1848, for example, had drawn upon him the notice of the community in which he lived. But all the time he was winning the confidence of those around him and laying wide and deep the foundations of a great reputation. It was during this period that his deep interest in education first began to take a practical form. His friends, Dr. Hook and Canon Jackson, of Leeds, Canon Robinson, of Bolton Abbey, and Sir James Kay Shuttleworth, found in him one who sympathized most deeply with them in their attempts to reform our educational system, whilst in the schools which he and his partner had established at Burley, Forster had a field of practical usefulness which it delighted him to cultivate. Before 1850 he may be said to have had theories on the question of education. After that date he

had something more, a living interest in the question, and a desire to provide for all children of English birth the benefits of a good school, which grew stronger with every year that passed, until the moment came when he was enabled to bring about the realization of his own visions.

His busy life of commercial and intellectual work was disturbed, early in 1854, by a very heavy blow. In October, 1853, his father left England on a renewed mission to the United States. He travelled in Indiana, Wisconsin, Louisiana, Georgia, and Tennessee, appealing to the governors of the slave states through which he passed on behalf of the slaves, and imploring them, if they could not at once terminate the accursed system, to do what they could to mitigate its horrors. He seems to have been received by most of the influential persons whom he visited on this errand with courtesy, if not cordiality; and he had the satisfaction of knowing that his efforts had produced some impression upon those who were at the head of affairs in the United States. Having completed his anti-slavery mission, the veteran preacher felt himself at liberty to enter upon the more exclusively religious part of his engagement amongst the Friends in Tennessee. He had not long, however, been employed in his religious labours, when he was seized with severe illness, at a small wayside house not far from Knoxville, about twelve miles from Tennessee, where he had

stopped to rest. In this little house the good man passed some days of acute suffering, and there, on January 27th, 1854, he died. He was buried in the Friends' burial place at Friendsville, a few days later, and there his remains now lie. No father was ever loved with a deeper, purer devotion, than that which was borne towards William Forster by his son. Though there was much in the characters of the two men which was at variance, the affection and the sympathy which existed between them was never weakened. Throughout his whole life the son entertained a genuine reverence for the virtues of his father, whose example of self-consecration and self-sacrifice shone before him constantly as one to be followed, even amid the vicissitudes of a public life in England.

Forster went at once to his mother, to be with her in her hour of supreme anguish, and he wrote as follows to Barclay Fox, shortly after the tidings had been received :—

"Earlham Road, Norwich,
"February 26th, 1854.

"My very dear Barclay,

"I hardly know whether thou wilt have heard of the heavy blow which has come upon me. I have lost my dearest father. The tidings came to my mother last third day evening, but did not come to us till the next morning. He was never able to leave the wayside inn at which he was taken ill, and died on the 27th, after a stupor

which lasted nearly two days. Some day I hope to let thee know all the particulars we know, which are, alas! not many; but I cannot bear to write them now. My mother's health is much better than we could have hoped, and she is wonderfully supported, though sometimes very, very low. Dearest Barclay, I cannot tell thee how bitterly I feel that I was so far from being the son to him I might have been.

"Thine ever,

"W. E. FORSTER.

"They could get so very little attendance, that twice large slaveholders, neighbours of the landlord, came to sit up during the night."

The death of Mr. Forster, senior, made a great gap in the family circle, and it may be well at this point to say something about the relatives who survived him. The "Forsters of Tottenham" were all known in the Society of Friends by reason of their philanthropy and their devotion to religious and benevolent work; though it was William Forster whose life had attracted most attention on the part of the outside world, and whose labours had been most abundant. One of his companions at the time of his death was his brother Josiah, who for more than twenty years had carried on the school founded by his grandfather at Tottenham, but had subsequently devoted himself to religious and philanthropic missions. The absorb-

ing interest of Josiah's life was the anti-slavery cause. He long survived his brother, living to attain his eighty-ninth year; and to the very last he was devoted to anti-slavery work in all parts of the world. The youngest brother, Robert, was by profession a land agent; but, like Josiah and William, he devoted himself largely to labours for the general good. His energies throughout life were mainly devoted to the spread of education, and for more than half a century he was a member of the committee of the British and Foreign School Society.

Forster's aunts, the sisters of his father, shared the philanthropic zeal which was so marked a characteristic of their brothers. One, Anne, was noted for her personal labour among the sick and suffering. Her youngest brother, Robert, who died at the age of eighty-one, had an illness of several years' duration. Anne Forster nursed him tenderly down to the day of his death; was taken ill immediately after his release from suffering, and survived him only three days. Another sister, Elizabeth, was as deeply interested in education as Robert Forster. She lived to see her nephew carry the Education Act through Parliament. Her first practical effort for the education of the poor was in connection with a little elementary school at Tottenham. When William Edward Forster became Vice-President of the Council, his aunt was wont to consult him as to the needs of

this school, and he entered fully into all her inquiries and difficulties, as is shown by a letter of his written from the Privy Council Office to her in 1870. "I am glad," he wrote, "the inspector's report is not against the teacher or the teaching, but merely against the school buildings and fittings. I suppose the school is the same as that in which I was caught with thee in a snow-storm in May some forty years ago, or its successor; in remembrance of which, thou must let me enable the school to be improved, so as to meet the present requirements, so please draw upon me for any sum up to twenty pounds thou mayst want for that purpose."

Mary Forster, the eldest of the sisters, followed in the footsteps of Elizabeth Fry, her chosen work being visiting prisons and seeking to redeem those who had fallen into vice and misery. The remaining sister, who survived all the others, and only died in 1880, was Sarah Forster, one of the ministers of the Society of Friends. Although Forster's grandfather had ten children, none left any issue but William Forster; so that, after the death of Miss Sarah Forster, in 1880, William Edward Forster was the sole survivor of the family. "I am the last of my name," he would sometimes say rather sadly. In the course of this narrative the reader has seen how close was the intercourse between Forster and his mother's relatives. It was not more close, however, than

that which united him to the honoured family of philanthropic workers at Tottenham. Down to the death of his aunt in 1880, he constantly visited the ancestral home, and nothing seemed to afford him more pleasure than to be able to do anything to add to the comfort or to further the wishes of those with whose interests in life he had so close a sympathy and for whom he cherished so deep an affection.

A year after his father's death his mother died. Writing from her bedside to Miss Gurney, he says, "My beloved mother must soon be at peace. I feel very much for thee in being away; but nothing could be done if thou wast nearer. Yesterday afternoon, she said, 'Dearest Cousin Anna, she is inexpressibly dear to me. The Lord be with her.'" A few hours later, the letter concludes, "All is over, dearest Cousin Anna. At half-past four, she departed peacefully in my arms." Now the last link that bound him to the home of his youth was broken.

It was about the time of his mother's death that another heavy blow fell upon him, in the loss of his old friend Barclay Fox. "I have lost the dearest, the truest, the most loving of friends," he writes—"such a friend as no man could expect twice in his life." It was well for Forster at that time that he had a home of his own, and that he was no longer entirely dependent upon the friendships of his youth. His marriage had made him

one of a large family, and he thoroughly enjoyed a position which to him was an entirely novel one.

"To-day," he says, writing to Mr. Ellis Yarnall on January 1st, 1854, "is the break-up of a large family party. We have been ten brothers and sisters this last week under our mother Mrs. Arnold's roof; and most pleasant and refreshing it is to me to find myself—only son as I am—the member of so large and united a family, every member of which it is most pleasant for me to be with."

The great public events of the decade were the Crimean war, the agitation in the United States which preceded the great rebellion, and the movement in this country in favour of a national system of education. So far as the war with Russia was concerned, Forster's interest in it was that of the ordinary Englishman loving freedom and devoted to his country. He regarded the war as entirely righteous, and believed that it was to be the lot of England to break down the autocratic system in Russia, and in doing so to give freedom both to the Poles and to the many subjugated races which had been brought under the rule of the czars. His attitude upon this question is interesting and important, because it shows how far he had diverged from the principles of the religious body of which he was by birth a member. He had absolutely abandoned the tenets of the Society of Friends on the subject of war.

Feeling all its horrors and evils as keenly as any man could do, he nevertheless believed that there was something worse than a war in a righteous cause. Accordingly, while so many members of the Society of Friends were doing their utmost to bring the struggle in the Crimea to a close at the earliest possible moment, without regard to the objects for which it had been undertaken, Mr. Forster was chiefly anxious that it should be waged with thoroughness and pertinacity until those ends had been achieved. Like the majority of his fellow-countrymen, he was disgusted by the unpreparedness, the vacillation, and the weakness displayed by our ministers in carrying on the struggle; but he had the fairness to refrain from joining in the clamour against particular ministers, and to point out to his fellow-countrymen, in letters to the newspapers, that what was wanted was not change of ministers so much as a change of the system of administration. He was, of course, like all men who held his views, disappointed by the manner in which the war came to a close, feeling that great European interests had been sacrificed to the exigencies of parties at home and the interests of our French ally. But this feeling of disappointment at the failure of England to accomplish her ends did not interfere with the satisfaction with which he saw an end put to the slaughter in the Crimea.

After the conclusion of peace, he presided over

a banquet given to the workpeople at Burley in celebration of the event, and one of the characteristic features of this special entertainment was his demand for "three cheers for the Russians." To fight an opponent with all his might so long as the contest continued, and when it was over to treat him with magnanimity was one of the rules of his life.

But it was not in the question of our struggle with Russia that his interest was most deeply engaged during this period. Even at the height of that struggle his thoughts were turned rather to the West than to the East. The labours of his father in America, his own intense interest in the agitation against slavery, and the fact that he had already formed many friendships with Americans, gave him a somewhat peculiar position among English politicians of his time, so far as affairs on the other side of the Atlantic were concerned. The people of the United States were then approaching the great crisis in their national history. Comparatively few Englishmen had any idea of what was passing beneath the surface in that country; but Forster was a keen and close and constant observer of events in North America. It was doubtless to the sympathetic interest with which he watched a political struggle upon which most Englishmen were apt at that time to look down with a certain feeling of disdain, that he owed the accuracy with which, at a later period,

he was able to forecast the course of events and to lead the opinions of his fellow-countrymen to right conclusions on the question of the civil war. He was, between 1850 and 1860, in constant correspondence with an American gentleman, Mr. Ellis Yarnall, and his letters to him show how strongly his feeling was interested on the subject of American policy. Writing to Mr. Yarnall, July 16th, 1856, he says, "Your domestic politics are just now intensely interesting. The pro-slavery fanatics are the best of abolitionists, and I cannot express my admiration of their conduct. This Sumner outrage, and the Kansas atrocities, have actually made an anti-slavery president a possibility, which neither you nor I could, a year ago, have imagined. If ever there was a clear course for a patriot it lies before him now in the United States. The honour, the liberty, the very existence of your commonwealth is at stake, to be saved if the prudent men are brave, but otherwise to be lost. I am not very sanguine about your public men, but I confess I like the look of Fremont. His being a Southerner is an advantage. Will he be a Southern Peel?"

On October 2nd he says to the same correspondent, "It gave me the greatest possible pleasure and comfort to hear of your being so entirely in your right place, doing your right work. And what work it is!—saving your country from sin and its punishment. I feel for and with you intensely; so much so, that my hand shakes when

I open an American paper. But yet I almost envy you. It seems to me never was the duty of a citizen more plain than just now it is to Americans. I can imagine all sorts of difficulties felt by good men with regard to abolition of slavery, the how and the when; but as to the extension of slavery a child may see what is to be done, and they must be heroes who do it." This of course had reference to the Kansas question, which was one of the immediate causes of the attempt of the South to secede. He continues: "If you can send it, I should be very glad of a copy of the Kansas Nebraska Bill as passed by Douglas; but remember this, do not stay for one moment from your work to gratify what alas! with me, is little better than curiosity, for I wish I could help you, but know not how.

"You know of course of Kingsley, the author of 'Hypatia,' 'Westward Ho!' etc. He used, I think, to be anything but an Abolitionist; but I cannot resist sending you an abstract from late notes of his to me. 'I want to talk over a hundred things with you: *inter alia* the fact of the day—the Kansas slave quarrel. This is the first growl of thunder, but the storm has not come yet. Compromise—with the expectation of which all respectable, elegant, diplomatic persons are poohpoohing the whole thing, "Oh, of course it will be compromised!"—is in my eye utterly unlikely so far as facts look just now. What is more, perhaps

God does not intend it to be compromised. Perhaps He does not intend men to go on any longer with the example of the French Revolution staring them in the face, denying that the God who ruled the Jewish world rules ours, and denying (all the while being abjectly afraid of it), that demoniac element in man which is the very fire of God. We shall see, both in Europe and America, whether the bed is not too short for a man to lie on, and the cloak too small to wrap himself in, and whether the daubing of mistempered mortar will keep the old wall up after all. On high authority, I rather expect that it will not.' "

His close study of American affairs, and his intense sympathy with the Party of Freedom, made him anxious to do what he could to enlighten his fellow-countrymen as to the merits of the impending struggle, and by speaking and lecturing in Bradford and throughout the West Riding, he did much between 1856 and 1861 to cultivate among his neighbours sound sentiments with regard to parties in America.

While he was thus doing what he could to enlist the sympathies of his fellow-countrymen on the side of the North in the American struggle, he was at the same time giving his ardent support to those English Liberals who were now raising a demand for a new Reform Bill. He had himself, as has already been told, been in favour of universal suffrage during the crisis of 1848 and the

movement of the Chartists. His opinions had now undergone some modification, but he was still one of the most pronounced advocates of a radical scheme of parliamentary reform. He had admired Lord Palmerston's conduct at the time of the Crimean war, and had cordially supported his policy with reference to foreign affairs; but he entertained a rooted mistrust of the Liberalism which the veteran statesman professed. He saw that no real reform of the electoral system could be expected from him, and he joined those who were inveighing against the paralyzing influence which Palmerston seemed able to exercise over the domestic politics of England.

It was as a Radical reformer, in favour of a sweeping extension of the suffrage, that Forster first came forward as a candidate for Parliament. It has already been told how the working-men of Bradford looked to him as their destined political leader, but it was not at Bradford that he made his first attempt to obtain a seat in the House of Commons. When the general election of 1857 took place, and the Radical party throughout England entered into a struggle for power with the Palmerstonian Liberals and Whigs, Mr. Forster's name was mentioned in connection with several important constituencies in the north of England. One of these was Newcastle-on-Tyne. The working-men and advanced Radicals of that borough, under the leadership of Mr. Joseph Cowen,

Junior, were looking about for some one to represent their cause in the election. Mr. Forster's reputation as an advanced politician, a thoughtful writer, and a warm friend of the masses, had reached their ears, and he was invited to Newcastle to confer with them. It is probable that he would have become the Radical candidate, if the Dissenters had not preferred a gentleman whose views upon the question of education were more in harmony with their own. At Huddersfield, and at York also, there were considerable parties who desired to secure him as their candidate; but it was at Leeds that he actually came forward as an aspirant to parliamentary honours.

The Radicals of that town knew him well, for at Burley he was almost as close a neighbour of theirs as of the people of Bradford. He had often spoken and lectured in Leeds, had written many letters to the *Leeds Mercury*, and had engaged in more than one lively passage at arms with Mr. Edward Baines upon the merits of a national system of education, carried out under the auspices of the State, as opposed to those of the purely voluntary system favoured by Mr. Baines. Both on the subject of parliamentary reform and of education, Mr. Forster's views were identical with those held by the Radicals of Leeds, and they were eager to secure him as their representative. He was proposed and carried at a large public meeting in the town. But another gentleman who was proposed

at the same meeting as a Liberal candidate and not carried, announced his determination to go to the poll. Mr. Baines had also been proposed for Leeds, and there was an almost unanimous feeling in his favour. Mr. Forster found that by persisting in his candidature, he might imperil the success of Mr. Baines, and he accordingly withdrew from the contest, which resulted in the return of Mr. Baines, and of a Conservative, Mr. Robert Hall.

To Mr. M. J. Ludlow.

"Burley, near Otley, April 5th, 1857.

"My dear Ludlow,

"Most hearty thanks for your notes. Nothing is more flat than stale electioneering, so I will make no allusion thereto—I suppose it will all come on again in due time—save, first, Lord Goderich certainly made a first-rate speech at his election for the Riding, and, next, what an inconsistency man is generally, and I especially. For years I have been raging and grumbling against the Manchester school, and yet could I have worked for either Cobden or Bright I should have done so with all my might. After all, they are men, and mean what they do, and that is something in these times, and I suppose in most times. How much parliamentary reform would you give? I should like to pick your brains thereanent. I fancy I could steal some notions which would be a credit to me. A Reform Bill

there must be plainly; so it may be well to discuss what.

"Yours ever,

"W. E. FORSTER."

Two months later, in May, 1857, Mr. Hall unexpectedly died, and Mr. Forster was again invited by a large meeting of the electors to come forward as a candidate. He issued an address, in which he declared himself to be in favour of a real measure of reform, "a measure giving to numbers and to intelligence more of their due share of the franchise, securing its free exercise by all; making the length of a man's purse no longer a test of his fitness to be a legislator, and allotting with less injustice to the different constituencies their share in the representation." In other respects his political creed was that of advanced Liberalism, perfect impartiality towards religious sects, the abolition of church rates, the adoption of a national system of education, and non-intervention in foreign affairs being among the points contained in his address. Once again, however, local jealousies, and above all, the antagonism of the Leeds Nonconformists and of their distinguished leader Mr. Baines to Mr. Forster's views upon the education question, proved fatal to his chance of success. Mr. Remington Mills, who had been defeated at the previous election, was again adopted by the more moderate section of the

party, whilst Mr. Forster was once more asked to come forward by the Radicals. Rather than cause a division in the presence of a common foe, however, Mr. Forster again retired.

This election had the effect of giving him a very prominent position as one of the leaders of the party in favour of a national system of education. After the election (June 29th, 1857), he was entertained at a banquet at Leeds by his political friends. In the course of his speech he made a vigorous attack upon the voluntaryists, as they were then called, showing how complete had been the failure of the voluntary system to meet the educational wants of the people of England. Strong as had been his feeling previously in favour of a national system of education, it became much stronger after his experiences in Leeds at this election in 1857.

It cannot be doubted that these disappointments—and others of the same nature which were in store for him—were very trying to a man of Forster's ardent temperament. It was shortly before his experiences at Leeds that he had written as follows to his wife:—

"July 11th, 1856.

"This birthday makes me think much; there have been so many of them before, and I have done so little. The world is so little, if at all, better for my tarriance in it. Would that the

future may be different from the past. It ought to be, seeing what a helper I have in thee. But oh! that I may from this day forth work harder, with more singleness, both of aim and motive, with less self-seeking, with more self-denial, nay, rather with less self-indulgence, for what right have I to talk of self-denial? and then perhaps I may find what is laid upon me to do, and in measure to do it. At present I seem to myself very much to fritter away both time and brain, even when I do not waste them. . . . Well, I wonder what the near future has in store for us. It is hard to think; but it is time I was doing more."

If there are any traces of depression and disappointment in this letter, he gave no outward sign of such feelings, but returned with manly vigour and cheerfulness to his daily work. It was only natural that, as the man who had been twice chosen by the Radicals of Leeds as a fitting representative of their section of the party, Mr. Forster should now have almost as close a connection with that borough as with Bradford. Accordingly, during the next two years, we find him delivering many lectures and addressing many meetings at Leeds. But he did not neglect the duty he owed to Bradford, and there also he took a leading part in promoting the reform agitation which was then in progress, and in assisting in the general public work of the borough.

In April, 1859, it seemed as though at last the opportunity for which he longed so earnestly had come. Parliament was dissolved, and Mr. Forster was invited to come forward by the united Liberal party of Leeds as joint candidate with Mr. Baines (now Sir Edward Baines) for the representation of the borough. Although there were some points of difference between the two candidates, it was to the credit of both that they worked together with perfect cordiality and good faith, Mr. Baines being accepted as the representative of the more moderate, and Mr. Forster as that of the more advanced section of the party.

A vigorous battle was fought, in the course of which Forster gave signs of growing power as a politician. The hopes of himself and of his friends ran high, and there seemed to be every prospect that Leeds was to secure the honour of being represented by the future author of the Education Act. But there were some timid souls among the electors who had been affrighted by Mr. Forster's reputation as an advanced thinker and ardent Radical, and when the poll was declared, it was found that whilst Mr. Baines was at the head with 2343 votes, Mr. Beecroft, the Conservative candidate, came next to him with 2302, Mr. Forster being 22 votes behind that gentleman. Thus, by a narrow majority, Leeds deprived itself of a representative of whom it might well have been proud. It is bare justice to the Liberal party

in that great borough to say that they viewed the result of the election with profound distress. Mr. Forster's connection with the town had been a close one for several years, and he had made himself the idol not merely of the working classes but of all those Liberals who were not bound by the trammels of Whiggism. The better he was known to the electors, the more keenly were his great qualities appreciated, and his defeat at the poll by 22 votes was the cause of real sorrow to them. Mr. Baines, in returning thanks for his own election, declared that the uppermost feeling in his mind was not one of joy, but of sorrow. "I deeply grieve," he said, "that I have not for my colleague that accomplished man whom you gave as my fellow-candidate, a man so sagacious and ardent as a reformer, so excellent in all the relations of life, so vast in his stores of knowledge, so honourable in his conduct before you, that he would have adorned the representation of this great constituency. We have done everything together," he continued, "and my estimation of my friend, now that the battle is over, is greater than it was before."

It was in the midst of this exciting contest that his thoughts were diverted by a very heavy blow which fell upon him within the family circle. This was the death of his wife's brother, Mr. William Delafield Arnold, at Gibraltar, whilst on his way home from India, where he had occupied

an important post in the Civil Service. In William Delafield Arnold, Forster, as has already been told, had found a congenial spirit, and though their opportunities of personal intercourse had been restricted by the absence of Mr. Arnold in India, they had maintained a constant correspondence, and had entertained for each other the warmest feelings of affection. "He was indeed a man after my own heart," writes Forster to his wife, immediately after receiving news of his death, "in some respects, and those very important ones, my ideal of a man; such unconquerable energy, such unfailing readiness, above all, such a high, and brave, and noble spirit; such a true and tender heart, and such a soul of honour, like an ancient knight, with a woman's sensitiveness. And then to think of his career, which looked as though it would be grand and useful, ended when it was but ready to begin. And then he loved me so much—but I am thinking of myself, and not of thee. The precious children! I do feel as much like a father as man can. May I be helped, so that if he can look down upon them, he may not feel that his trust in me has been misplaced."

These words were written whilst the election for Leeds was still undecided. "I can hardly bear," he says, in conclusion, "to turn to this evening's work. It reminds me so that one of my greatest pleasures in anticipation was the joy

which he would feel in my success. Success is doubtful enough, but that does not matter much."

Immediately after his defeat at Leeds, Mr. Forster set off to meet the four orphan children of his brother-in-law on their arrival in England, and from that time to the day of his death he stood towards them in the place of the father whom they had lost. "In the spring of 1859," says Mrs. Forster, "a great change came to our home life, by our adopting the four orphan children of my brother, William Delafield Arnold. He was the fourth son of Dr. Arnold, and, after being educated at Rugby and Oxford, he received a cadetship in the Indian army, and went out to India from Oxford at the age of twenty. In 1850, he married Frances Anne Hodgson, a daughter of General Hodgson, of the Indian army. They were married from the house of Lord Lawrence, then Sir John Lawrence. My brother's health broke down, and in 1853 he had to come home on sick leave, and remained at home for two years. When he returned to India, he was appointed Director of Public Instruction in the Punjab, and had the difficult and honourable task of first organizing education in that province. He was engaged in this work when the mutiny broke out. His home was at that time at Dhurmsala, and there his youngest child was born in August, 1857.

"Mrs. W. Arnold's health had been failing for some months, and in March, 1858, she died, before

her husband, who had been summoned back from a distant inspecting tour, could reach her. It was settled that the four children should come home to us, and their father sent them home round the Cape, following himself by the overland route, and intending to meet his little ones in England, and bring them first to Fox How, and then to us. But his own health had received a severe shock in all the anxieties and sorrow of the past year. The doctors had hoped benefit from the voyage; but he became worse, and was taken so ill at Cairo that he had to be left behind. After three weeks, he struggled on to Gibraltar, where he was landed in a dying state, and there he died on the following day at the early age of thirty-one. In my brother Matthew Arnold's poems there is one called a 'Southern Night,' which refers beautifully and touchingly to the early deaths of William Arnold and his wife.

"There was a great charm and great nobility in my brother 'Willy's' character, combined with remarkable energy and ardour, and something of youthful vehemence. He was a younger man than my husband by several years; but their characters had much in common, and they were interested in each other from the first. My husband's warm affection for him is shown in several of his letters. In honour of William Arnold's memory a medal was struck, 'three of which, in gold and silver, were to be given every year to the

ripest scholars in the schools which he founded in the Punjab. The medal bears on the obverse his likeness in relief exquisitely carved, and conveying the precise impression which so fascinated his friends—a kind of sweet stateliness in accord with the whole tone of his mind; the reverse bears the simple inscription, "In memory of W. D. Arnold, first Director of the Department, 1855."' His friend, Mr. Meredith Townsend, after thus describing the memorial in a letter to the papers, concludes with this tribute to my brother,—'William Arnold did not live long enough to gain his true place in this world; but he had time enough given him to make himself of importance to a Government like that of Lord Dalhousie, to mould the education of a great province, and to win the enduring love of all with whom he ever came in contact.'"

The year 1859 was memorable as that which witnessed the first of the great continental wars of the middle of the present century. When it was known that the French emperor, not satisfied with having effected the liberation of Italy, intended to recompense himself for his sacrifice by the annexation of Savoy, there was a mighty outburst of public indignation in this country, and for a time feeling ran so high, that war between us and our Crimean ally appeared to be not improbable.

Mr. Forster felt as strongly as any one the

selfishness of the policy of France, but he was one of those who through this national crisis stood most firmly on the side of non-intervention. A great meeting in favour of peace was held in Bradford. He attended it, and delivered a speech in favour of non-intervention; but the most characteristic incident connected with his appearance at this meeting was not his speech. The great Hungarian patriot, Kossuth, had been invited to attend. Forster himself had taken a prominent part years before in welcoming Kossuth to the shores of England, and the feeling of enthusiasm with which he regarded that illustrious man was fully shared by the people of Bradford. The peace meeting was crammed by an eager crowd, anxious to listen to Kossuth's words. But to their grievous disappointment, the Hungarian patriot did not make his appearance. The truth was that Mr. Forster, feeling that the effect of the meeting would be weakened if it were not made exclusively English and local, induced Kossuth to stay away, taking upon himself the full responsibility for having done so. In after-years he was wont to say that this "bottling-up" of the Hungarian patriot was the boldest thing he had ever done. There can be no doubt that, however prudent the step might be, it was one which exposed him to the risk of some unpopularity among his Liberal fellow-townsmen. Fortunately the people of Bradford, though they were disappointed at the non-

appearance of Kossuth, appreciated the reasons for Mr. Forster's action; and he did not suffer, as might have been expected, from what he had done.

As all the world knows, we escaped from the threatened war with France; but, following upon this strained state of our relations with that country, came the volunteer movement in England. Forster threw himself into it with enthusiasm. It was difficult indeed to recognize in the captain of volunteers, who was eager above all things to perfect himself in his drill, who spent hours on the moors practising at the target, and who played the part of an indefatigable recruiting sergeant both at Bradford and at Burley, the son of the old Quaker preacher, whose whole life had been given to the promulgation of the doctrine of passive resistance. But the Quaker preacher's son had convinced himself that there were worse things in the world than war; and now, when it was proposed that English citizens should arm themselves, not for purposes of aggression, but in order that they might be prepared to resist a possible invasion, he was one of the foremost in carrying on the work. "I too," he says, December 2nd, 1859, writing to his friend, Mr. Thomas Hughes, "am volunteering: *mirabile dictu*. I am calling our mill people together this evening, and hope to raise from them a subdivision. I am anxious about this, because I

think, if it takes, it may be followed in many other mills, and this would not only lead to a large increase of volunteers, but would do great indirect good by bringing masters and men together, giving them good-fellowship and *esprit de corps*, giving the young factory men capital training and exercise, and, most important of all, enlisting the working-men, and thereby not only making them patriotic, but preventing the middle classes being confoundedly conservative, which we shall be, if we are armed, and the operatives are not. However, we have two rocks in the way. One is the feeling hereabouts in favour of a genteel corps, which I dare say will be neat enough, but a mere plaything—for instance, one hundred men at Leeds for its two hundred thousand—and next, my total and ludicrous ignorance. To make the men take to it, I shall have to be one of their awkward squad myself; and awkward enough I shall be, for I never could keep step with any one, and never handled a gun in my life."

It will not be necessary to pursue in detail the history of Mr. Forster's connection with the volunteer force. As he himself said, in the lines just quoted, he began in absolute ignorance of everything appertaining to volunteering. Amusing stories are told of his ignorance of the way in which a man ought to handle a gun; and no one who had known him up to that point in his life, believed that it would ever be possible for him to

make a creditable figure in a march past. There were besides many among his older friends who looked somewhat askance at the zeal which the son of the old Quaker minister was showing in a movement of a decidedly military character. But Forster's energy overcame every difficulty. He set himself to learn with thoroughness the duties of a citizen soldier, and he, who had never up to that moment fired a gun, not only made himself proficient in his drill, but became a very fair shot, as was proved in subsequent years, when he was more than once selected to shoot in the Lords and Commons match at Wimbledon. The ardour of his devotion to his duties as a volunteer was the distinguishing feature of his life during the year 1860; and though his parliamentary career necessarily prevented his following a military life as closely as he could have desired, he never lost his interest in the volunteer force, but continued both as a citizen and a politician to afford it all the support in his power, whether he was dealing with his own corps at Burley, or with the volunteer army as a whole.

In December, 1860, he went to Hythe, to pass a course of instruction in musketry, not it might have been supposed, a very pleasing or easy task for a man of his years and training. Yet the following extracts from his letters at the time show the spirit in which he did that which he believed to be his duty.

"Hythe, December 4th, 1860.

". . . Well, here I am at school, sure enough, and what is more, feeling somewhat of a new boy. But to my journal. I was hard run all yesterday. I only just got in time to Apperley, and at 3.30 I went to a large and rather important committee meeting of persons wishing to ask Gladstone and Cobden to a Bradford banquet, at which, being in the chair, I was only just able to leave so as to catch the Great Northern as it was starting. Rain all the way. This morning, too, they called me too late at the Great Northern Hotel. I only just caught the Dover train. Rain again—a pity, as the drive from Folkestone Junction to Hythe, through Sandgate, close under the cliff, was very pretty. I drove straight to the Swan, and immediately went in search of lodgings; and I think I have housed myself very comfortably. . . . I then went to report myself at the barracks. There were about twenty members of the class there, the rest not turning up till evening; for I hear eighty-nine are expected. We were formed into two squads, and put through the platoon several times, in which I cannot say I was brilliant; but I shall do it much better next time. I cannot say I like the American news. What I fear most is not disunion, but some compromise of the North to the South to keep them."

"Post Office, Hythe, December 5th, 1860.

". . . I fear I have not time to-day to do more than merely say I have got through my first day's schooling, and schooling it is, to an absurd exactness! After getting classed this morning into sections (by-the-by, to my horror I am right hand of my section), we were marched upstairs into the schoolroom, with a narrow bench, a desk before us, no room for our legs or rifles, and there we had to learn the parts of a lock, etc. Our work was a hard physical and mental grind, and if both my memory and my left arm be not strengthened by the time I get back it is a pity! I find I know absolutely nothing, and am therefore a complete muff; but I think I get better hourly. A young Melly from Liverpool has introduced himself to me. . . . The weather is, for the time of year, good; feet deep in slush, and heavy showers occasionally, but on the whole, fine overhead, and not cold."

"Hythe, December 6th, 1860.

". . . Last evening we had a large *table-d'hôte* at the Swan; discovered we had no colonel, or major, or lord, so appointed as our chairman Captain Macgregor, acting Adjutant of the Highland London Scottish, and had a long debate on prizes. . . . It is very much the largest volunteer class there has been. I think the majority are captains, and I should say the average age is full

thirty-five; not a few quite young men, but some bald and grey-headed ancients. . . . I told you that this morning we were classified; our section has the northern men, a jolly captain from Harrogate; a jollier—in fact, an enormous—captain from Whitehaven; Ensign Robinson, from Skipton, etc."

"Hythe, December 14th, 1860.

"Fate has been unkind to me to-day. If I can get into the first class to-morrow, I shall not despair of being a marksman. The highest score to-day was eleven, and the excitement is intense, everybody asking everybody what he has made, careless whether he knows him or not. . . . Is it not absurd, being so interested? but I defy any one to avoid it."

"Hythe, December 16th, 1860.

"This has been a comparatively quiet day. In the morning I went to church—a fine old church—and though not yet a first-class man, I had the honour of sitting in the position of Alderman of Hythe. Since lunch I have been to the camp at Shorncliffe, and a dreary-looking place it is, and returned by Sandgate and the beach. It is a mild, muggy day, but if to-morrow is like it, it will not be bad for shooting. . . . Our volunteer parson read prayers this morning, and a very nice fellow he seems to be. He was a Crimean chaplain."

"Hythe, December 17th, 1860.

". . . Certainly the mixture of men here is striking and amusing enough. I wish I had the power to draw them, with either pencil or pen. First, our chairman—if not the Macgregor, he is of close kin to him, upright as an arrow, close on six feet. With his eagle feather and in his kilt he looks the soldier. He is a leading low churchman they say, a gentlemanly fellow, and apt with his tongue, and with a good deal of dry humour and much talent for caricature—good-humoured but clever caricatures. No. 2. Lieutenant—three inches taller than me, in a magnificent red coat, and with a moustache with the true military twirl; very gentlemanly, but somewhat pompous — his whole soul absorbed in the movement. No. 3. Lieutenant—a fat sallow face, deep in hair, looking half soft till you see the Irish twinkle in his eye. No. 4, a wild, fierce scapegrace, amusing, but almost too coarse to be bearable. Then we have impudent young shopkeepers from London, still more impudent barristers—not bad fellows, though; I play whist with them,—young fellows just from college, old travellers, respectable country gentlemen, and a few old soldiers,—all on terms of perfect equality. Chaff abounds, as you may imagine. It is an amusing experience, and I am not sorry to have had it, but I do not wish to renew it. Not the least noteworthy are three Dumfries farmers, who mess together, one of

them, especially, a magnificent fellow—fifty years ago he would have been a Dandy Dinmont; six feet two, weighing fifteen stone, straight as a pin, an owner I find to-day of six thousand sheep. Well, I must go and secure seats of honour at the mess, as I have asked one of the officers to dine with me, so with dear love to you all,

"Thine,

"W. E. F."

CHAPTER IX.

ELECTION FOR BRADFORD.

In the month of February, 1861, Mr. Forster's life-long desire to obtain a seat in the House of Commons was at last gratified. After much trouble and disappointment, this coveted triumph was attained with ease. Mr. (afterwards Sir) Titus Salt, the sitting member for Bradford, retired from the representation on the ground of ill health, and there was an almost immediate demand, on the part of the electors, that Mr. Forster should become his successor. Some difficulties, however, stood in the way. It will be remembered that at the last election for Leeds Mr. Forster had been one of the joint candidates of the united Liberal party. He had, however, created some distrust among the more moderate members of that party by the warmth with which he advocated a sweeping measure of parliamentary reform. A week or two before Mr. Salt's resignation, a meeting was held in Leeds for the purpose of establishing a Radical Reform Association. Mr. Forster was warned by many of the most in-

fluential Liberals in Leeds that he would seriously imperil his chances of success if he were to take any part in connection with the formation of this association. But the principles of the association were those to which he himself held strongly, and he was not to be deterred from giving them his support by any fear of the results. Accordingly, he went to Leeds and delivered a strong Radical speech on the necessity for a great enlargement of the franchise. Within a few days Mr. Salt's resignation occurred. The Bradford electors were, on the whole, more inclined towards Radicalism than those of Leeds, yet some of them viewed with disfavour the pronounced action of Mr. Forster, and when his name was submitted to a public meeting of the electors, they brought forward, in opposition to him, another local man, Mr. Priestman. There was another section of the Bradford electorate which regarded Mr. Forster with suspicion, though on very different grounds. The fact that he had ceased to belong to the Society of Friends was urged against him by those who might be called the political Dissenters of the borough. These gentlemen were anxious to secure Mr. Edward Miall as their representative. It is curious to note that in the speech of Mr. Miall's proposer at the public meeting at which the question of the Liberal candidature was to be settled, one of the charges brought against Mr. Forster was that he was no longer a man of peace,

inasmuch as he was known for his zeal as a captain of volunteers. But though there were thus some who were disposed to make occasions for fault finding, if they could not find them ready made, the overwhelming majority of the Liberal party in Bradford was enthusiastic in Mr. Forster's support. The *Bradford Observer*, February 7th, 1861, referring to the situation, said: "Mr. William Edward Forster would be an honour to our constituency. We do not know the question he has not studied, especially within the range of politics, in the best and broadest sense of the term; and we do not know the question on which reading and meditation have not led him to sound and just conclusions. It is well to have a member who votes right, but it is better to have one with the qualities of a statesman. Those who know Mr. Forster best, and who are best able to judge in these matters, know that he has the qualities of a statesman in no ordinary degree. Strong natural powers, well cultivated, facility and elegance of expression, high moral principle, and strong sympathy with the masses of the people."

These utterances of opinion, on the part of the leading newspaper in Bradford, expressed the general sentiments of the constituency. Mr. Forster was selected by an overwhelming majority of the Liberal electors as their representative; the Tories felt themselves powerless to prevent the return of so strong a candidate, and accordingly on

Monday, February 11th, he was elected without opposition.

The following day he went to London, and with characteristic eagerness drove straight to the House of Commons, but found that he was too late to take his seat that night. The next afternoon he was introduced by Mr. Wickham and Mr. Baines, and took his place below the gangway, on the Ministerial side.

The gratification of that which had been the ambition of a lifetime was, it need hardly be said, a matter of unfeigned rejoicing to Mr. Forster. No man of his time had been more anxious to win a place in Parliament, and none had more zealously and steadily sought to prepare himself for the duties of a representative. There had been many periods in his career, up to this point, when it had seemed to him that the struggle was in vain, and that inexorable circumstances must for ever bar his way to a parliamentary career. With what courage and perseverance he fought against these doubts, as well as against the substantial difficulties which he had to encounter, only those who were acquainted with his inner life can know. Now that the goal of his ambition had been reached, he threw himself into his new life with something of the enthusiasm of a boy. No one attended the House more regularly, no one listened more attentively to the speeches—often dull enough, as he admits in his diary—no one was more zealous in discharging those

smaller duties which attach to the life of a Member of Parliament, such as attendance with deputations, and committee work outside the House. During this first session of Parliament, he took a house in Guilford Street, Russell Square. His first appearance as a speaker was on February 22nd, when he asked a question referring to the clearance of vessels in South Carolina. He records the incident as follows:—

"After breakfast at hotel, wrote out short speech for my question, about which very anxious, because of touching on slave trade. Went with Indian deputation to Lord Palmerston's at Cambridge House at two. Said a few words. Deputation large. To House. Took seat at prayers—two off Bright's seat, but he not there, so spoke from his seat. Had to catch Speaker's eye, which was awkward, but arranged with him when I was to get up, which I did at 6.30, Milnes and another rising at the same time, but there were cries for Forster. The House was not full, nor yet thin: had been inattentive, but was tolerant of a new member, and therefore attentive, and cheered me when I sat down, which I did in a few minutes, having said my say. I was civilly spoken to by several afterwards, but was greatly relieved by Lord John's reply, who promised me my correspondence, and said the consul had not acknowledged the new Government, thereby proving that my question had done good rather than harm. Dined afterwards

at House. Milnes, who made a good speech on Wife's Sisters Marriage Bill, told me I pronounced lamentable la*ment*able. He introduced me to old Pam at tea, who was gracious."

The year 1861 was memorable in the history of the world as having witnessed the outbreak of the great rebellion in the United States. There were not many incidents in Parliament during that year, however, to show that the English public appreciated the gravity of the situation and the magnitude of the issues involved in the conflict. Mr. Forster's question, which bore upon the possible recognition of the Secessionist Government by English officials in America, was one of the first occasions upon which Parliamentary notice was taken of what was happening on the other side of the Atlantic. It is characteristic of his strong feeling on this question, that within a few days of his election he should thus publicly have identified himself with the friends of the North.

Soon afterwards he took another and still more important step in moving an amendment to a resolution of which Mr. Gregory gave notice in favour of a recognition of the Southern Confederacy.

To ELLIS YARNALL.

"May 10th, 1861.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"I can only send a hurried line, but I cannot be longer without saying how intensely

interested I am in this crisis of your country, and how much I, I may say we, sympathize with you in what must be your feeling. Terrible, however, as is civil war, I cannot say but I greatly rejoice in the outburst of patriotism throughout the North. I am doing what in me lies to help it there.

"A Mr. Gregory, M.P. for Galway, who lately travelled in the South, and who has returned well humbugged by the Southerners, insists upon proposing to the House the absurd but mischievous notion that we should promptly recognize Jefferson Davis's Confederacy. I have met his notice of motion with corresponding counter-notice, and expected the debate to come off a week or two ago; but at the pressing solicitation of the Government he put it off. Most men of influence in Parliament wish him not to persist in bringing it forward, but he talks of doing so this day week, so I send you a *Times*, with the terms of my counter-notice. I wish it had fallen into the hands of a member of more experience to stand up for the North and the Union; but I must do what I can.

"I am in constant communication with Mr. Motley and Colonel Fremont, and the new American Consul just arrived, and several other intelligent Americans. I cannot say how glad I am of the news in yesterday, which I think makes Washington safe.

"I fear I cannot write more now; please direct to us, 74, Guilford Street, Russell Square,

London, where we are for the session with our adopted children. My wife joins me in kindest regards to Mrs. Yarnall and yourself.

"I asked rather an important question in the House yesterday about letters of marque, and elicited from our Under-Secretary that he would issue a proclamation against British subjects engaging in that or in any way in your quarrels,

"Yours ever affectionately,

"W. E. FORSTER."

It was, however, rather with the question of parliamentary reform, at that time revolving round the fate of Mr. Baines's Borough Franchise Bill, than with the destinies of the great republic, that the House of Commons was interested. Forster believed in the sincerity of the professions made by Lord John Russell on the reform question, but he had no belief that any reform bill could be carried whilst Lord Palmerston remained at the head of the Government. As has already been said, he had admired Lord Palmerston's foreign policy greatly, and in his diary he alludes regretfully to the fact that he had felt himself compelled to vote against him on the question of the "hocussed" Afghanistan papers, adding, that the facts were too strong to allow him to do otherwise. But although with his strong sense of the imperial position and destinies of England he was constrained to admire the high-spirited patriotism which characterized

Lord Palmerston's management of our foreign affairs, he entertained the most profound distrust of his policy in domestic matters, and it is certain that nothing would have induced him to serve in a ministry of which Palmerston was the chief.

If the House took little notice of what was happening in the United States, Mr. Forster himself was by no means so indifferent. Throughout the session he kept a watchful eye upon those members who were anxious to force the recognition of the South upon us, and he records with some satisfaction, in his diary, how he was called to order from the chair for the eagerness with which he opposed the attempt of Mr. Gregory to plead the cause of the Confederacy on the floor of the House of Commons. His speech on this question attracted not a little notice in the press, and as a parliamentary "first appearance" was an unequivocal success. Men recognized his earnestness, and perceived that he had not merely a special interest in, but special knowledge of, American affairs. He thus came to be identified in Parliament with the Northern side in the great struggle. It was natural, in these circumstances, that Mr. Adams, the American minister, and other distinguished Northerners, should have sought his acquaintanceship, and in his social as well as in his political life he found himself, during this session of 1861, in close alliance with the representatives of the North in this country.

During a brief holiday in Switzerland, after the work of the session, he received news of the outbreak of hostilities between the North and the South. "While at dinner," he says, writing to his wife, "came in thy dear letter of Monday, giving me the first news of the American battle, the telegram and leader on which I have since read in the *Times*. It is a terrible business; but in my inmost heart, though I would not say it to anybody but thee, I cannot say I am sorry. It looks as if the whole affair was so overruled as to prevent its being settled without the settlement of the leading question, for of course this defeat must postpone the end."

How strong his feelings were was shown by the lecture which he delivered in the month of October, at the Bradford Mechanics' Institute, on the civil war in America. Public opinion in England was at that time seriously divided. In Lancashire and Yorkshire, the bulk of the working classes were strongly pro-Northern in their sympathies; but to a certain extent in those counties, and to a much greater degree in London and the south of England generally, the upper classes had taken their stand on the side of the South. There were very few men of anything like Mr. Forster's position who at this time openly declared themselves as advocates for the triumph of the North in its struggle with the Secessionists. Mr. Bright was of course a shining exception to the majority

of his fellow-countrymen, and he lost no opportunity of making his opinions known; but next to Mr. Bright and Mr. Cobden, whose health was then failing, Mr. Forster was undoubtedly the most prominent of the public men of England who protested against the idea that the Great Republic was to be broken up in the interests of the slave-owners of the South. It is an indication of the position which he had thus obtained, as a representative of the feeling in favour of the North, that his lecture before the members of the Bradford Mechanics' Institute was reported at considerable length in the *Times*. The lecture left no room for doubt in the minds of those who heard it as to the opinions of Mr. Forster. It was an attempt to bring home to the people of this country the real character of a struggle which was at the time greatly misunderstood in England.

"The war arose," he said, "from the difficulty of solving the problem whether Christian and civilized men should keep millions of their fellow-creatures in bondage—more particularly when those men were not in a distant country but living among them in their very homesteads as it were—and keep them as slaves, and treat them as though they were beasts." The common view at that time in English society was that the whole contest was a political one; "a struggle," as Lord Russell expressed it a few days after Mr. Forster lectured, "on one side for empire and on

the other for independence." Few persons now hold that opinion; but in 1861 there were comparatively few Englishmen of position who dared to refute it. Mr. Forster, however, was one of these.

"To those who had watched the progress of events upon the American continent," he said, "it appeared absurdly unnecessary, nay, even puerile, to state that any other cause than slavery could be assigned for the civil war." It was not merely, however, to bring home to the English public the real cause of the conflict that Mr. Forster spoke. He was still more anxious to impress upon his fellow-countrymen the duty laid upon them by the crisis in America. "He impressively urged," says the report of his lecture, "that this country should adopt the principle of absolute non-intervention. We could not interfere for freedom or for the North. He trusted that nothing would condemn us in the disgrace of interfering for the South. . . . He thought that, in place of treating the struggle with a cold cynical indifference, the sympathies of Europe ought to to wholly with the North. We ought to make allowance for them in a time of so much calamity. We ought to wish them success, as we wished success to freedom. We ought to trust in the God of Justice and of Mercy, who, he believed—and he trusted that it was not irreverent to say so—was so shaping this question, terrible as it might seem,

as to get rid of this, the greatest curse of a civilized and Christian country."

To-day these words sound like mere truisms, but it was very different at the time when they were uttered.

The lecture attracted much attention on the part of those who were interested in the formation of a sound public opinion in this country on the events in America. Mr. Bradford Wood, the American minister at Copenhagen, was one among many of the Americans in Europe who wrote to thank Mr. Forster for his words.

"It is a gratifying surprise to me," writes Mr. Wood, "to find such accuracy of knowledge on a subject where some of your leading journals, such as the *Times* and *Saturday Review*, show so much ignorance. It may be that I am mistaken as to the ignorance exhibited by those papers on American affairs, but that it is design, and in common with the *New York Herald* that they labour to bring about a war between Great Britain and the United States. I have my apprehensions that they might ultimately succeed in this nefarious design, unless Englishmen like yourself do all you can to counteract such wickedness. While reading your lecture I could almost fancy I was reading one given by Governor Chase, or some equally intelligent American. . . . I know that the emissaries of the South in Europe have said that they had assurance of assistance from

England before the outbreak. I do not believe this, and Mr. Cobden assured me last spring, when I passed through England, that you had nothing to fear from your operatives. The death-blow to slavery will be when England procures her cotton from some other country than the United States. Should I again visit England, I shall pay my respects to you. I am here as the minister of the United States, and should you visit this city during my residence here I should be very happy to make your personal acquaintance."

The letter was forwarded through Mr. Cobden, who, in enclosing it, wrote to Mr. Forster as follows: "I read your address with much anxiety, and was glad to see you advocating what I regard as the right side in this deplorable civil war, against the attacks of so many who in this country are in their hearts with the South, partly from ignorance and partly because pure democracy is hateful to them. For myself I have made up my mind never to occupy myself in reasoning about the right or wrong side of a cause after people have begun to fight about it. This determination was the result of my experience in the Crimean war. . . . From the moment that men abdicate their reasoning powers and call in such arbitrators as steel and powder and horses and waggons to settle the matter in dispute, the issue depends entirely on the exhaustion of one or both parties. In the mean time the obviously impossible object—

I mean impossible to those who look calmly on, and know anything about it—makes as good a battle-cry as any other. All that is wanted is a cry that everybody can utter. In the Crimean war it was the integrity of the Ottoman empire. In the present American struggle it is the integrity of the Union. I look upon both objects as alike impossible. What I am still much concerned about is the preservation of not only peace, but a good feeling if possible between England and America. To this end, reason and argument and moral influence may contribute, because as yet we have not begun to knock each others' brains out. I have little faith in our Government. . . . All we can do is to keep a watchful eye. I was much pleased to see Lord de Grey intimate that it would be better to make any sacrifice to support the cotton interests than to violate our principle of blockade and international law to furnish the raw material of this industry. What I would say, therefore, is—be on your guard. It is in the earliest stages of a quarrel only that the friends of peace and justice can be of any use in averting war."

In the following month (November), Mr. Forster visited Lord Houghton, at Fryston, and found there among his fellow-guests the American minister, Mr. Adams, and his wife; and it was whilst the party was staying in Lord Houghton's house that Mr. Adams received a telegram announcing the seizure of Messrs. Mason and Slidell, the two

envoys sent by the Confederate Government to Europe, whilst passengers on board an English mail vessel, by the captain of a United States cruiser.

"Well, my dearest," writes Mr. Forster to his wife, immediately after returning from Fryston, "of course you have heard this most deplorable news. We went to Pomfret Castle yesterday, and just as we got in, Adams said, in his cool, quiet way, 'I have got stirring news,' which indeed was a telegram from the Legation with the story. I think he is as much grieved as I am, and does not think a hundred Masons and Slidells would be worth the effect on us. But I suspect, from what he says, that Lord P. suspects himself that the seizure is within the letter of international law, intensely foolish as it has been. The leader in the *Times*, happily, is moderate in tone. . . . At the best, however, it is a great calamity."

The whole country was stirred to its depths, the eagerness to vindicate the outraged dignity of the English flag being stimulated by the fact that in doing so the ruling classes would be able to give practical effect to their strong sympathies with the American Secessionists. It was a time when the friends of the North were compelled to exert themselves, if they were not to allow their country to plunge headlong into a conflict which would have been a calamity to the civilization of the world.

Mr. Forster did his best to calm the public

agitation. He seized the first opportunity of addressing a few words to the Bradford electors upon the subject. On December 3rd, he went to London, and used all his influence with the leading Liberal politicians whom he knew, to induce them to take a calm view of the situation.

"I have been busy talking all day," he writes to his wife, December 4th, "and trust I have thrown some oil on the troubled waters, but struggling for peace is like the struggles of a drowning man. I breakfasted with De Grey, then spent more than an hour with Layard, then some time with Townsend and Hutton. On the whole, though both sides expect war, I am hopeful. I trust I have done something to combat the foregone conclusion that Seward wishes war. General Scott's letter will do good, and I am especially glad, as I have been hearing all day the French *canard* about him."

From London he went down to Fox How, the home of Mrs. Arnold, near Ambleside, and he records in his diary a "long talk" he had with Miss Martineau on the American question. For the moment it absorbed all his thoughts. His one anxiety was not to induce the English Government to withdraw from a proper demand for reparation for the outrage upon our flag, but to lead those in authority and those who had the power of influencing public opinion, to adopt such a tone as would make it comparatively easy for the American

Government to comply with the demands of Lord Palmerston. His hopeful anticipations of a pacific settlement of the dispute were, as we know, realized; but whilst matters were still in suspense he addressed his constituents, strongly urging that, in case of the refusal of the American Government to give up Mason and Slidell, we should propose an arbitration before resorting to war. Such a war, he declared, whatever its occasion might be, would practically be a war in the cause of slavery. "I am not prepared to fight," said he, "in that cause, until I have done everything in my power to avert war. If, after having done this, the Northern Government still insist that there shall be war, the responsibility rests with them; but I shall have nothing to do with it until I am sure that everything has been done to prevent so great a calamity." The result of his urgent appeal to his constituents was the adoption of a resolution in favour of a settlement of the question by arbitration, in the event of the refusal of Mr. Lincoln's Government to comply with the English request for the liberation of the Confederate envoys. These speeches of his secured for him the honour of a leading article in the *Times*, criticising severely his proposal, and condemning as utterly absurd and unreasonable the notion that England could consent to arbitrate when a reasonable *casus belli* had been afforded to her. Happily the difficulty was solved by the good sense and modera-

tion of the American ministers themselves, though not until a million of money had been wasted by this country over military preparations, due to what Mr. Bright justly called "an unhappy accident."

In the session of 1862, Mr. Forster and his family took up their residence at the house No. 18, Montagu Street. His diary shows that at this time his social engagements began to increase both in numbers and in importance. One of his closest and most intimate friends was Lord de Grey, the present Marquis of Ripon, and frequent mention is made of the breakfasts at which they met and discussed those political questions in which they were chiefly interested, the subject of education being one of the most important of them. It proved in after-years to be a fortunate circumstance that Lord de Grey and Mr. Forster had been enabled to come to a thorough understanding with each other with regard to the educational wants of the people. No one can doubt that Mr. Forster's work at the Education Office, in 1870, was greatly facilitated owing to the fact that the President of the Council was his old friend and fellow-worker in the education cause.

The Cosmopolitan Club was a favourite resort of his then and throughout the remainder of his life; and he seldom fails to record in his diary the names of the more interesting persons whom he met and with whom he conversed there. His friendship with the persons of literary and in-

tellectual distinction, whose acquaintance he had made in Yorkshire, instead of being interrupted by his parliamentary duties, was strengthened by the opportunity which residence in London afforded of frequent intercourse. He and Mrs. Forster were regular attendants at Vere Street Chapel, of which at that time the Rev. Frederick Maurice was the incumbent. Mr. Forster had objected strongly to Maurice's views regarding the early Quakers, but his affection and deep respect for Mr. Maurice never suffered any diminution. Among the social intimacies of his life at this time, however, none was really of greater importance than his friendship with the American Minister, Mr. Adams, and with the American circle in London. Throughout this session of 1862 he continued to be one of the staunchest champions of the North in the House of Commons, constantly opposing the attempts which were still made by Mr. Gregory and other friends of the South to induce Parliament to interfere in the struggle, either by the recognition of the Confederacy, or by a refusal to recognize the blockade proclaimed by the North on the Confederate seaboard. When an insidious attempt was made to induce this country to promote the interests of the South by offering her mediation between the belligerents, no one opposed the proposal more strongly than he did. His firm conviction was, as we have seen, that the battle was one between slavery and abolition, and his whole

anxiety, seeing that England had no right to interfere on the side of the North, was to frustrate the efforts of that large and influential section of English society which wished to bring about intervention in the interests of the South. That the war would result sooner or later in the entire abolition of slavery was his profound conviction, though with characteristic frankness he confessed that he could not for his own part see how this result, certain as it was to be attained, was to be brought about.

Another question of importance occupied much of the thought of Parliament during this session of 1862. This was the proposed introduction of a revised code, under which grants were to be made to children according to their age and the proportion of their attendances at school. Public opinion was at last beginning to awake to the fact, so long patent to the more thoughtful class among us, that our want of a system of national education was a disgrace to us as a people. Mr. Forster on the platform had for years been distinguished by his advocacy of a great reform in the whole educational system of this country; but when the terms of the new code were made known, he was one of those who believed that it would aggravate rather than remove the existing evils. His chief opposition was to the mechanical grouping of children by age in deciding their claim to the capitation fees. He joined Mr. Walpole in

opposing the code, and it was in no small degree owing to his opposition that eventually the new regulations were modified in such a manner as to make them generally acceptable to the House. They fell far short, indeed, of that which he and all other educational reformers desired; but they were at least a step in the right direction, and they brought the public mind nearer to the contemplation as a practical measure of that great scheme of national education upon the establishment of which his heart was set. One result of the opposition of the House to the scheme was the resignation of Mr. Lowe, then Vice-President of the Council.

Proof of the importance of the position which Forster was beginning to take in the House of Commons is furnished by the fact that in May he was specially asked by Mr. Brand, the Liberal whip, to reply to Sir Stafford Northcote, who had given notice that he intended to attack Mr. Gladstone for a speech in favour of reduction of expenditure which he had made at Manchester.

The prominent part which had thus fallen to Mr. Forster's lot led to his being involved in one of the many attempts which have been made by the Radical party in the House of Commons to grapple with the great question of national expenditure. He and Messrs. Baxter and Stansfeld resolved to bring forward a motion in favour of reduction, for the purpose of affording moral

support to Mr. Gladstone in the economic policy which he was advocating. The proposal assumed practical shape at a breakfast-party given by Mr. Forster, which was attended by Mr. Childers, Mr. Baines, Mr. Seely, Mr. Baxter, Mr. Stansfeld, Mr. Leatham, and others, it being resolved that the resolution should be moved by Mr. Stansfeld and seconded by Mr. Forster. Unfortunately, as has too often been the case with these platonic demonstrations in favour of economy in the House of Commons, the well-meaning scheme miscarried. "Stansfeld's motion;" says Mr. Forster (Diary, June 3rd), "did not speak on it. Such a *fiasco!* He said a few words on Palmerston's amendment. Not well received; but no wonder. The whole affair a great mess."

Amid the parliamentary labours that were now pressing upon him he lost none of his interest in his domestic and business affairs, above all in the welfare of his workpeople. In 1862 the second great international exhibition was held in London. The death of the Prince Consort in the preceding December did much to deprive it of the brilliancy which attached to the original Exhibition in 1851. It was, however, an event of great importance to the industrial fortunes of this country. The Exhibition of 1851 had done much to bring new ideas into the minds of Englishmen of the upper classes; the Exhibition of 1862 did even more to familiarize artisans with the condition of labour abroad. It

was, indeed, described at the time as a great object-lesson for those engaged in manufactures in this country. Mr. Forster and his partner, Mr. Fison, determined that their workpeople should have the advantage of that lesson, and they accordingly brought the whole body of their *employés*, six hundred in number, from the peaceful Yorkshire village to see the great sight in London. This, if I mistake not, was the first occasion upon which any large body of workpeople had been brought by their employers from a distant part of the country to London for such a purpose. Mr. Forster showed his usual energy and zeal in carrying out that part of the work which fell to him—the entertainment and care of the workpeople in London. An unfurnished block, just built by Mr. Cook, the well-known excursion agent, was hired and temporarily fitted up for the entertainment of the people.

Diary, July 1st.—"Went to city in morning to see city police about trip. Dined at home at half-past three; Mr. Black with us. Two policemen came from Sir Richard Mayne to help with the people. Was at Great Northern at 5.30, waiting for workpeople; their train arrived about seven. Sent the women in vans to Cook's house, and men off with policemen to their lodgings. They cheered children in balcony as they passed Montagu Street. Jane and I busy settling them in their home till past ten.

"*July 2nd.*—Breakfasted early; down at house at half-past eight. Took people down river in two steamers to Westminster Bridge; then took people into Westminster Hall, House of Commons, House of Lords, and Westminster Abbey. Lord Charles Russell gave leave to take people in sections of sixty to Strangers' Gallery. I stood below and explained to them. Dean of Westminster let them go into Henry VIII.'s Chapel. Then took them by palace and parks to International Bazaar. Met Sir George Grey and Brand. Ran them across Constitutional Hill, policemen stopping the traffic. Jane with us at Westminster Hall. Took the women and half the rifle corps to house. Sent the men into bazaar to dine; then to Exhibition. Collected people at fountain at three-quarters past six. Took them to house and found them all right. Stayed with them till ten, when they sang Evening Hymn. Then Jane and I went home, tired enough.

"*July 3rd.*—Jane and I, with Eddie and Pen, down at house, after our breakfast, at half-past eight. Took the people in steamers down the river to front of Tower; back to St. Paul's Wharf, then into St. Paul's. By wish of archdeacon they went into service. The rifle corps went into crypt to see the Duke of Wellington's tomb; then walked down Old Street in the rain to King's Cross, city police stopping traffic at Newgate. Punctual to a minute at station. At quarter-past twelve saw train off in Fison's charge."

During the closing weeks of this session of 1862 he was much exercised by the Poaching Bill, which had been brought in in the interests of the country gentlemen. He fought it resolutely, taking the lead of the Radicals who were opposed to it; but he was unable to bring about its defeat, and had to be content with the knowledge that by various amendments introduced at his suggestion it had been reduced to nonsense.

How quickly he was growing in public estimation was proved by the fact that his name was repeatedly mentioned in connection with the appointment of a successor to Mr. Laing as financial member of the Indian Council, and that he was sounded by two of the most important members of the Radical party in the House of Commons as to the formation of an independent Liberal party, holding advanced views, and designed to keep in check the more Whiggish tendencies of the Palmerstonians. Like many other schemes of the same kind, this however, came to nothing.

A severe attack of illness, an affection of the throat, to a recurrence of which he was always liable, prostrated him in the autumn. He was laid up for some time, and was compelled to go to Scarborough to recruit his health. As soon as he had recovered his strength, he threw himself into committee work in connection with the movement for the relief of the distress in Lancashire. His business affairs at this time were prospering, and

the freedom from pecuniary anxiety enabled him not only to devote more of his time to public work, but to subscribe largely to public objects. Of these there were none at the moment which interested him more deeply than that movement which was designed, not merely to relieve the terrible distress of the Lancashire operatives, but to support them in the almost heroic attitude which they assumed during the struggle from which they suffered so severely.

The object of the friends of the South was, of course, to excite feeling against the North, by pointing to the terrible consequences of the blockade of the cotton ports, so far as our Lancashire operatives were concerned. Mr. Forster was one of those who believed that, whatever the consequences might be to us, it was our bounden duty to stand aloof from the struggle in which issues greater than any affecting our commercial prosperity or the welfare of a particular class were involved. In delivering his annual address to his constituents, towards the close of November, he said:

"Our hearts were full at that very moment of the miseries of our suffering fellow-countrymen in Lancashire. What could sound more plausible than to exhort those people who were cutting their own throats and starving our people at the same time not to attempt this old-fashioned and brutal way of settling their disputes, but to entreat them

to do it by reason and argument. If exhortation and entreaty would do this—and they all exhorted and entreated to the utmost of their ability—surely if they could induce them to settle the slavery question, for it was slavery, let them not mistake it, which lay at the bottom of this war, by reason and argument, by all means let us do so. The cause of freedom at any rate would not thereby lose; but there was not the slightest hope that mere exhortation would have had an effect which had not been produced by the public opinion of Europe expressed as it had been. . . . He had never been one who in past days had admired American government or praised American freedom; because, until the stand lately made by the Republican party, he had felt that the so-called American freedom was a sham freedom based upon the worst form of government, personal slavery. Men had laughed at him, and said that he was fanatical upon that point; but he thought that it had been proved that he was right, and that American freedom had been shown to be based upon a rotten foundation, and if an attempt was now made to patch up the Union on the basis of slavery there would neither be freedom nor peace in America; for, after all, there were men there, however they might be cried down, who cared too much about freedom to permit slavery to be continued without agitation. He would therefore earnestly support the British Govern-

ment in opposing all interference in American affairs, which at the present time would be tantamount to supporting slavery."

One of the consequences of this speech was a discussion into which it had led him with Mr. Cobden. In the course of his address Mr. Forster expressed his astonishment that Mr. Cobden had advised advanced Liberals to withdraw their support from Lord Palmerston, and to put Mr. Disraeli into power in his place, on the ground that Mr. Disraeli on some domestic question was really more advanced than the Prime Minister. Forster strongly disapproved of the conduct of the Government in home affairs, but he had far more confidence in Lord Russell and Lord Palmerston in foreign affairs than in Mr. Disraeli and Lord Derby, and he offered a stout opposition to the suggestion of Mr. Cobden. It will have been gathered from his speech at Bradford that he really saw only one great fact in connection with the American struggle, that was that the fate of the slave system was involved in it. All who knew him must have been aware that this fact alone was sufficient to determine his course of action. After his death, one who had known him better than most men, was discussing with one of his nearest relatives the course of his public life and the varying motives by which at various times his action had been guided. The conclusion to which both came was that the real master-

passion of Forster's life was his abhorrence of slavery. He had inherited his feeling on the subject from his father; it had been strengthened by his early intercourse with his uncle; and it grew with his growth in his experience and intellectual power. All through the American struggle it was this passion which guided his course of action and led him to run counter to the prevailing sentiments among the upper classes of his fellow-countrymen, just as in subsequent years it was the same strong feeling which made him champion the mission of General Gordon to Khartoum and oppose the ministerial policy in South Africa, at the cost of his own popularity with the political party to which he belonged.

The course of the struggle in America cannot be followed in detail in these pages. It must suffice to say that in the sessions of 1863 and 1864 he continued in Parliament, whilst advocating the observance of strict neutrality by England, to use every opportunity to counteract those who were endeavouring under one subterfuge or another to advance the interests of the Confederates. In his own district he presided over many meetings held for the purpose of awakening public interest in the emancipation question, and did much by his speeches to stimulate the sound opinions which Yorkshiremen held upon the subject. In Parliament he early foretold the troubles that were certain to accrue to this country from the laxity of

the authorities in not preventing the building and the escape of the Confederate cruisers. It was in connection with the question of our duty as regards the building of ships of war for the Confederates that he received a letter from Mr. Cobden, from which the following are extracts:—

"Midhurst, April 5th, 1863.

"By last mail I got a letter from Sumner expressing so much anxiety, that I wrote privately to Lord Russell, urging that the British Government should be more than passive in enforcing our foreign enlistment law, and suggesting as a proof of friendliness that he should give Mr. Adams the particulars of all the vessels being built for the Chinese Government. In reply, he tells me that he had anticipated my suggestion; on which I have written to Mr. Adams to suggest that he should make this fact and the particulars furnished to him public. It would show a friendly spirit, which should be known in the States, and it would remove the mistake under which some of our respectable shipbuilders are constructing vessels of war, and compel them to invent some other customer than the Emperor of China. Nothing could be worse than the tone of the Premier and the House on the last evening before the recess. It is to be regretted that the subject was not reserved for a more thorough debate. I understood that you were going to ensure a favourable reply or

otherwise not to bring on the question. I am afraid you have entered the arena of parliamentary life with too lenient an opinion of official men. The course Palmerston has taken will involve England in a war or a great humiliation. Every word of his insulting taunts and puerile recriminations in the above debate will be burnt as with hot iron into the memories of the Americans, who have a special dislike for the man."

The debate to which Mr. Cobden alluded was one raised by Mr. Forster regarding certain rams then being built in English ports. Writing to his wife, April 7th, he says:

"I send thee a letter from Cobden, received last evening, which much increased my anxiety lest the debate had done harm. He ought to have remembered that he strongly advised my bringing it on, irrespective of ministerial replies. Imagine, then, my relief this morning on hearing that Government had actually seized a ship in Liverpool, and my pleasure in being able to write to Cobden that after all he was right in advising no delay."

Cobden's criticism of Mr. Forster's speech, though characteristic of the impetuous leader of the anti-corn law movement, was not that of other advocates of the Northern cause. A contemporary newspaper observes with regard to the same speech, "that it was exceedingly temperate, well

composed, and argumentative, and put that master of dialectics, the Solicitor-General, completely on his mettle to answer it."

It must not be supposed that Mr. Forster was one of those advocates of the Northern cause who out-Federalized the Federals in their devotion to it. Whilst he was urgent in impressing what he felt to be their duty upon his own fellow-countrymen, he was equally anxious to secure justice for our Government at the hands of the heated partisans of the North. Writing to an American gentleman, a friend of Mr. Sumner's, October 13th, 1863, he said:

"I am much obliged to you for your note, although I much regretted not having the pleasure of seeing you. I wanted much to impress upon you my strong conviction that our Government mean the preservation of strict neutrality, but that their difficulties in so doing are much increased by the suspicion of their intentions expressed by your statesmen. I do not doubt that you will have learned during your stay that our Government is under constant pressure from France to act against you. Surely resistance to such pressure ought to be met on your side with confidence rather than with suspicion. I therefore cannot say with what regret I read Mr. Sumner's speech, which to us reads like a laboured effort to prove to your people that the English Government is not only their enemy, but even

more their enemy than the French. I think Mr. Sumner ought to know that such a speech as this makes it very uphill work for your friends here; because it gives a colour to the argument so insisted on by the partisans of the South here and in France that you are determined to revenge yourselves on us when you can. I know, of course, the utter absurdity of such talk; but any one who believes it will wish to prevent your having the power to revenge yourselves on us, will wish to establish a Southern Confederacy; and therefore an attack upon England, such as Mr. Sumner's, which for the reason above stated I believe to be unfair, is not only an appeal to the anti-English war feeling on your side, but a direct and powerful aid to the Southern sympathizers on this."

Everything now seemed to conspire to bring Mr. Forster to the front in Parliament. He had been forced into a position of prominence in connection with the absorbing question of the time, by the strength of his feeling with regard to slavery, and by the fact that his knowledge of American questions was probably unequalled by that of any other member of the House. Many newspapers were beginning to point to the brilliant future which seemed to lie before him. Writing to his wife regarding some of these flattering predictions, he says:

"You see we had jumped at the same esti-

mate of all these puffs; notwithstanding there remains this fact, that the want by the Liberal party of a new man is great and felt to be great. The old Whig leaders are worn out. There are no new Whigs. Cobden and Bright are impracticable and un-English, and there are hardly any hopeful Radicals. There is a great prize of power and influence to be aimed at. There is no denying this; and I do not think duty tells me not to keep the prize before me; but may I direct my course in humility and with the sense of the responsibility of every step and of every accession of influence. It is by dwelling on this responsibility that I can alone hope to be saved from selfishness and the temptations of vanity whether gratified or wounded."

In this year, 1863, Mr. Forster took the house No. 80, Eccleston Square for the season. He liked it so much, that he finally took a lease of it; and it was for the remainder of his life his London residence.

The civil war in America was now entering upon its last stage, and it is noteworthy that, as the certainty of a victory for the North and the Union became clearer, so did the bitterness of the sympathizers with the South become greater. Their efforts in the House of Commons were still directed towards procuring some intervention on the part of this country which should either directly or indirectly be favourable to the Con-

federates. But ministers were learning wisdom. The depredations of the *Alabama*, a vessel built in an English shipyard, and sent forth on its devastating voyage from an English port, were beginning to cause grave uneasiness among the more thoughtful class of politicians in this country, and ministers were now resolute in their determination to prevent the equipment of any similar ship. During the session of 1864 they were bitterly assailed by the Southern sympathizers because of their action in seizing two steam rams which, although ostensibly being built for the French Government, were in reality designed as companions to the *Alabama*.

Mr. Forster, along with Mr. Bright and Mr. Cobden, did everything possible to maintain the Government in the strict observance of the laws of neutrality. It was no longer necessary to labour incessantly for the purpose of setting forth the true merits of the great struggle in America. The English public by this time had learned the lesson which the friends of the North had from the first been endeavouring to teach it; and though in high places the feeling in favour of the South was as strong as it had ever been, among the masses of the population there was a general conviction that the triumph of the North was not only certain but in every way to be desired.

A personal question of some interest attracted not a little attention during the session of 1864.

Mr. James Stansfeld, the member for Halifax, had in the previous year accepted office under Lord Palmerston as Junior Lord of the Treasury. It transpired during the course of a trial in Paris, on a charge of an alleged conspiracy to assassinate the Emperor of the French, that some of the conspirators had been in correspondence with a Mr. Flowers, residing at a house in Thurloe Square. The number of the house was the same as that in which Mr. Stansfeld lived; and the members of the Opposition were eager to bring home to one of Lord Palmerston's colleagues a charge of complicity with the political assassins of the Continent. Mr. Stansfeld himself, it need hardly be said, was wholly innocent of any offence of the kind; but his assailants were able to establish the fact that the Mr. Flowers, whose name was mentioned in the correspondence of the conspirators in Paris, was identical with the great Italian Mazzini, who was known to be Mr. Stansfeld's intimate friend. A hot cry was raised against the member for Halifax. When the question was brought before the House of Commons, Mr. Stansfeld acknowledged his friendship with Mazzini, but scornfully repudiated the idea that Mazzini was mixed up in any scheme of assassination. The first man to stand by Mr. Stansfeld's side on the floor of the House was Mr. Forster. He, too, claimed the friendship of Mazzini, and in a speech of genuine warmth and emotion defended both Mr. Stansfeld and the

Italian patriot from the disgraceful charges which were being brought against them by the members of the Tory party. The House of Commons by a narrow majority refused to pass anything like a vote of censure upon Mr. Stansfeld; but the affair had created a profound impression abroad, and Mr. Stansfeld felt constrained to withdraw from the Ministry.

It was in this same session of 1864 that the question of parliamentary reform was again brought prominently before the House by the introduction of Mr. Baines's bill for establishing a £6 rental qualification in boroughs. Mr. Forster strongly supported the measure, the principle of which received a qualified degree of support from Mr. Gladstone, then Chancellor of the Exchequer. At the close of the year fresh proof was afforded of the growth of Forster in parliamentary influence and position by his appointment as a member of the Schools Inquiry Commission, the object of which was to consider the existing endowments of the middle class schools of England, and the whole question of middle class education.

The spring of 1865 was made memorable by one of the heaviest blows which the political life of England had sustained for many years—the premature death of Mr. Cobden. Cobden and Forster had not always been able to agree; and a year or two before there had been a somewhat

sharp passage-at-arms between them regarding one of Mr. Forster's speeches to which Cobden objected. No difference of opinion, however, diminished the personal respect which each felt for the other. Writing to Mr. Forster, January 19th, 1865, Mr. Cobden says:

"I read with pleasure your speech, and noted your too kind allusion to myself. I am not an habitual reader of speeches. Perhaps, like the grocer's apprentice in the matter of figs, I have had a surfeit. You and Bright are exceptions to my rule. Your utterances have a distinct meaning. Gladstone's speeches have the effect on my mind of a beautiful strain of music. I can rarely remember any clear unqualified expression of opinion on any subject outside his political, economical, and financial statements. I remember on the occasion when he left Sir Robert Peel's Government on account of the Maynooth grants, and when the House met in unusual numbers to hear his explanation, I sat beside Villiers and Ricardo for an hour, listening with real pleasure to his beautiful rhetorical involutions and evolutions, and at the close turning to one of my neighbours and exclaiming, 'What a marvellous talent is this! Here have I been listening with pleasure for an hour to his explanation, and I know no more why he left the Government than before he commenced.' It is, however, a talent of questionable value for public leadership."

Cobden died on the 2nd of April, 1865. On the 10th of March he wrote his last letter to Mr. Forster, and one extract at least is worthy of being given from it:

"The Brahmins in Hindostan and the Daimios in Japan owe their sway to a public feeling about as rational as that which procures the homage of West Riding clothiers to our feudal aristocracy. What is to be the course of political events in a not remote future in this country is a question which I have often asked myself, especially since I have witnessed, in relation to American affairs, how stupidly prejudiced and opposed our middle and upper classes are to the ideas which lie at the foundation of all political enfranchisements everywhere within this island. Is there one in a thousand who foresees the great struggle against feudalism which impends over us or our children? Nay, is there one in ten thousand of us that dreams of the fact that we are the only nation where feudalism with its twin monopolies, landed and ecclesiastical, is still in power? This is literally the only great country which, to use Goldwin Smith's phrase, is still wearing its grave-clothes of the Middle Ages. The longer the evil exists the larger it grows. In the rural counties the large landed properties are swallowing up the smaller, till the middle class political element is rapidly disappearing altogether; but it is in Ireland that the operation of the landed and

ecclesiastical monopolies is felt with the bitterest severity. As in mechanics so in politics, the whole cannot be permanently stronger than its weakest part; and it is in Ireland that the crash of feudalism will be first heard."

Extract from Diary.

"*Sunday, April 2nd.*—Dined at Reform Club. Much shocked on getting there to hear of Cobden's death at eleven in the morning.

"*Monday, April 3rd.*—After breakfast went to Reform Club, found Bright, Bazley, etc., talking of adjournment of House on account of Cobden. Bright in great grief. He sent me to consult Gladstone, who talked to me about pension to Mrs. Cobden. Went back and brought Bright to Gladstone. Went to House and heard eulogies of Cobden by Palmerston and Disraeli; Bright saying a few words with great feeling. Drew up a letter with Bazley, at Bright's suggestion, for procession of M.P's. with Cobden's hearse on Wednesday morning, but Moffat called at dinner-time to countermand it.

"*Thursday, April 7th.*—Went by special train at 9.40 to Cobden's funeral at Lavington, near Midhurst. Beautiful day; very striking scene; respect without show. Went in train with Adams, Moran, etc."

One of the great bonds between Mr. Forster, and Mr. Cobden was the practical identity of their

views on the subject of the American war. Both were rejoicing, at the time when Cobden was struck down by death, at the imminent prospect of the complete triumph of the North. A few weeks after Cobden had been laid in the grave, the terrible tragedy of Lincoln's assassination occurred.

Extract from Diary.

"*Wednesday, April 26th.*—On getting to House, heard rumour of President Lincoln's assassination, and attack on Seward. Speaker gave me printed slip. Took hansom to Reform Club. There saw third edition of *Times* with it. Still I could not believe it. Went on to Adams. With me another hansom drew up with boy with telegram. Went upstairs with servant. He opened and read it. Full account from Stanton. I said at end, 'God grant your people a cool head.' Adams perfectly cool. All London staggering. I went to Foreign Office. Saw Layard and Hammond; they had no special despatch. Took down my account of Adams, to send to Lord Russell and telegraph to the Queen. Back to House, where I signed address of M.P's to Adams."

This session, which witnessed events of such deep interest to politicians both in England and in the United States, was memorable also as being the last during which Lord Palmerston sat in

Parliament. Remembering all that followed upon Palmerston's death, it is interesting to recall the fact that the session witnessed the commencement of the parliamentary movement on behalf of Ireland which has had such momentous results. On March 31st, Mr. Maguire, the well-known Member for Cork, moved for a Select Committee to inquire into the laws regulating the relations between landlords and tenants in Ireland, with a view to their more equitable adjustment. This motion was seconded by Mr. Forster. Lord Palmerston, it was evident, was strongly opposed to it. At the outset of his speech he declared that if there was one thing a nation ought to respect it was the rights of property. But with his usual adroitness he did not offer any direct opposition to the proposal, contenting himself with suggesting a more limited inquiry into the tenure and improvement of law in Ireland under existing Acts. This suggestion was agreed to, and for the moment Irish affairs were allowed to fall once more into the background.

We must turn, however, for a short space from public affairs to matters more directly affecting Mr. Forster in his personal life. He had been very busy during the session in connection with the Schools Inquiry Commission, for it need hardly be said that he had thrown himself with all his energy into work so thoroughly congenial. His parliamentary duties, his business affairs, to

say nothing of the committee work, of which he was always full, in connection with public movements, had filled up all his available time, so that before the session closed he was thoroughly worn out. He and his friend Mr. Ball left England in July for a trip in the Austrian Tyrol, which they greatly enjoyed.

Soon after his return from abroad Mr. Forster was seized with a sudden and violent choleraic attack. On October 16th he had been all day at a shooting match on the moor; that day was wet and foggy, and he had probably taken a chill. Early on the following morning he was attacked with all the symptoms of cholera. His wife's diary says: "He was frightfully ill all day with cramps and sickness. We kept applying hot flannels to check the cramps. Could do nothing; and we were helpless till Mr. Rhind came about five o'clock. He stilled the cramps by chloroform, the sickness by sulphuric acid, and God be thanked the danger was over by night. He passed a very restless and sleepless night, but had no relapse, and though very weak began to revive."

Cholera was in the country at this time and many people were interested in hearing of the means employed by Mr. Rhind, who was a man of great ability and originality. He wrote a letter to the *Times* to explain the treatment used, which he had found successful in other cases also.

The alarming character of this attack is

reflected in a letter to Mrs. Forster from her brother, the Rev. E. P. Arnold, who had been staying with them at the time. "I am glad that when you wrote dear William was again better. . . . I never shall forget that Tuesday as long as I live. I was feeling so unwell myself that the suddenness and violence of his illness made a still stronger impression than it would generally have done—but I shall always think with admiration of his courage and patience."

Scarcely had Mr. Forster recovered, when he received from his wife a sudden summons to Rugby, whither she had been already called by the illness of their adopted son, Edward Arnold, who was at school there under Dr. Temple. The boy's state had suddenly become critical, and he hung between life and death for several days, his father watching over him with the tender solicitude of a woman. Some notes written by Mrs. Forster immediately afterwards give the outline of these anxious days. "As soon as William came he telegraphed for nurses. On Tuesday, E. was for the most part unconscious, but whenever we could penetrate to his consciousness he would take whatever he was told. William often succeeded in getting him to take things, and Edward generally knew him. On Wednesday morning, he seemed to be sinking very fast. Dr. E. left, saying he had lost the power to swallow and could not live an hour. . . . But this proved to be the crisis of the

fever. He gradually revived, and consciousness, which had been completely suspended, gradually came back. For a week he continued in a most anxious state. But after the second Wednesday there was a more decided amendment. After the first week Miss Temple could not continue her help in nursing Edward, as first Bruce and then Yates were attacked with the same fever and lay ill at the sickhouse. Bruce recovered, but poor little Yates died after we left Rugby. My dear husband came to Rugby as often as he could, but was much engaged, as soon after the crisis of E.'s illness, he received the offer from Lord Russell of the Under-Secretaryship for the Colonies. He deferred the acceptance for a week, and meantime made a speech at Bradford on reform, after which Lord Russell renewed his offer, thus almost pledging the Government to the views on reform which William had declared—so it was regarded in the country. Nothing could be more self-forgetting or beautiful than my dear husband's complete putting aside of all this question of worldly advancement as compared with his absorption in Edward's illness—he seemed to have no thought for it.

"The generous and affectionate sympathy and hospitality of the Temples can never be forgotten by us. Their house was turned into an hospital for an infectious fever, all the children turned out of it—and yet such was the completeness of their

sympathy that one felt as if the sorrow were their own as well as ours. And so closes the history of this deep trial and wonderful deliverance, for which God be thanked."

From this extract from Mrs. Forster's diary it will be seen that whilst Forster was in the midst of his anxiety regarding his son, he received the offer of a post in the Ministry. Lord Palmerston had died, and Lord Russell had succeeded him as Premier. A partial reconstruction of the ministry had taken place in consequence. Mr. Chichester Fortescue, who had been Under-Secretary for the Colonies, had been appointed Secretary for Ireland, and the former office was consequently vacant. On November 15th, Forster received an invitation from Lord Russell to call upon him at his house in London. He went to town from Rugby the next day.

The Premier offered him the Under-Secretaryship for the Colonies. "I made no hesitation," he says in his diary, "except on reform. He said Gladstone and he would bring in a bill. I stipulated for vertical extension. He assented, but said I might leave them if I did not like the details of the bill when I saw it. He used the word 'inquiry,' and I said I trusted there would be no Commission, stating strong objections thereto. Upon that point he could not give me a distinct answer, so I agreed to call again on Saturday at 11.30, after a Cabinet meeting. Came down to

Rugby by 2.45 train. Found Edward improving. I wrote a note to Lord Russell stating that I understood I was to reserve my answer till I knew more about Commission."

This extract from Mr. Forster's diary will afford some indication of the strength of his feeling on the question of reform. Some time before Lord Palmerston's death, when it had been suggested that he was likely soon to obtain office, Forster had declared emphatically that he saw no possibility of his doing so whilst Palmerston remained at the head of affairs. However ambitious he might be of political distinction, he was resolute in his determination not to sacrifice to his own advancement a cause which lay so near to his heart. This feeling was just as strong now that the offer of an important post had actually been made to him, as it was when office still lay in the remote distance. Accordingly, on his return to his son's bedside at Rugby, on the day of his interview with Lord Russell, he wrote to the Prime Minister as follows:—

"School House, Rugby,
"November 16th, 1865.

"DEAR LORD RUSSELL,

"Upon thinking over our conversation of to-day, I see so much difficulty in the appointment of a Commission on the reform question, that I must beg your lordship to consider your proposal to me, which on many grounds I should be glad to

accept, unanswered until I have had the opportunity of seeing you on Saturday. I think this was our understanding; but to prevent possible misconception I felt sure you would allow me to write you a line.

"I am, my lord, with much respect,

"Yours faithfully,

"W. E. FORSTER."

On Saturday, the 18th, he again saw Lord Russell.

Extract from Diary.

"Called on Lord Russell at 11.30. He could not give me answer about Commission. I stated my objections, which he heard very willingly, and proposed I should make my speech and he would write to me afterwards." (A speech which he was about to make at a reform meeting at Bradford). "I said, as he might not like what I said, I should not think myself ill used if he then withdrew his offer. So we left it. I having taken occasion to refer to his remark on Thursday that if I did not like the details of the bill I might retire."

His son continued to improve, and he was able to leave him for Wharfeside, in order that he might prepare his speech for the Bradford meeting. Whilst he was there, and before the meeting took place, he received an urgent letter from Mr. Brand, the Liberal whip, begging him not to commit

himself against a Commission of Inquiry on the reform question, and assuring him that such inquiry, if carried out by Lord Russell and Mr. Gladstone, would be *bonâ fide* and not intended for the purpose of delay. In reply to this letter he wrote (November 20th, 1865):

"With regard to a Reform Commission I have with you every confidence that Lord Russell and the Cabinet will propose nothing for the purpose of delay, or of shifting the responsibility; but I greatly fear a Commission would be so regarded, and, indeed, I do not see how a question of this importance can be referred by Government to men not its own officers, without the Government losing its hold of it. If this Commission were not composed of men of great weight and of different views it would be useless, because considered incompetent and one-sided. On the other hand, a weighty Commission, with all the appurtenances of a secretary, of hearing evidence, and of framing a report, would I fear, while sitting, take the place of the Cabinet in the public mind, so far as reform was concerned. Again, the consequent delay, though delay be not intended, would be a wet blanket to all support by reformers, and depend upon it anti-reformers are not to be conciliated or got round. I hope you will not consider me impracticable or presuming, if I beg you to let this side of the question have its fair hearing from Lord Russell and the Cabinet."

On Wednesday, the 22nd, he made his speech at Bradford. It is probably not often that a public man has had to speak under more delicate and difficult circumstances. Throughout his life he had been anxious to find a place in the service of his country as one of the Ministers of the Crown. The realization of his laudable ambition was now within his reach; but between it and him stood a question of principle, and he was prepared to sacrifice everything rather than his own convictions and his pledges to those who had believed in him in the past. In addressing his constituents, after paying a tribute to the great qualities of Lord Palmerston, he dwelt upon the gravity of the crisis in domestic politics which the country was then facing. "The country," he said, "not only demands reform, but it expects it, and the Government are aware that it is necessary to their existence, to their continuance as a Government, that they should meet that demand. . . . I never addressed a meeting on reform in this town of Bradford," he continued, "with anything like the same hope upon the question as I do now; because I have confidence that the Government will bring forward a bill, because I have confidence, looking at the character of the men composing the Government, that it will be a comprehensive bill, and because I have also confidence that when they bring it forward it will be with a determination to stand or fall by that bill. . . . Depend upon it

that the only danger the Government are in upon this subject, if they are in any danger at all, is that they may make the opposition greater than they need by want of boldness in bringing forward the measure. I trust they will not fall into that mistake. The danger is not so much opposition on the ground of principle, but a danger which I feel it almost humiliating to bring before a meeting such as this. I think there may be a great many members who, having just had all the turmoil and all the disturbance of a sharply contested election, will not be very much in favour of the introduction of a measure, the result of the passing of which would be to bring on another election pretty speedily; and I think it is possible that men in that position may be bringing influence to bear upon Government to delay the introduction of that measure. But, after all, these are considerations and influences which a Government in earnest can afford to despise, and which need not delay the settlement of this question for a moment. I have no fear whatever for the Government; as I trust they will come forward at the earliest possible period next session and declare they are only waiting to bring forward a Reform Bill, and that an enormous majority of their party in the House will support them."

This declaration of his opinions was, it will be seen, sufficiently uncompromising, and no one who heard it at the time could have imagined that at

that very moment the question of his admission to the Government was to a large extent dependent upon his attitude on the question of reform. On November 24th he called on Lord Russell, who received him cordially, and renewed the offer of the Under-Secretaryship, telling him that it was all right about the Commission. He accordingly accepted the offer.

To his Wife.

"Reform Club, November 24th, 1865.

"My dearest Wife,

"The telegram would inform thee I am a Minister, 'a fox without a tail,' as De Grey says. Almost the first words Lord Russell said were, 'Well, I have read your speech, and like it very much.' 'I am glad you do not dislike it,' said I. Then, after talking the meeting over, he said, 'Well, there are two things to talk over; first, as to inquiry, we find we can get a good deal of information from clerks of unions, but whatever more information we want we shall get opinions only from ourselves,' or words to that effect, so there was no more talk about the Commission. He then went on to talk about how to admit some, not only officers, but also rank and file workmen, without admitting those who would sell their votes for a glass of gin, which turned into questions by him as to the workmen in my district, of whom he supposed me informed; during which talk we

admitted it was a matter needing care and thought, but I added I feared there would be disappointment if the bill offers less than the £6 qualification he offered before, unless there were counterbalancing concessions. He then, after a good deal of pleasant talk, said as to the office he supposed there was nothing to prevent my joining. I said if after my speech he was willing to take me, I had nothing more to say, except that I should consider it a high honour to serve under him. 'You know,' he said, 'if you take office you must have trust in Gladstone and me.' I said I had it, and I believed my party also. And so we mentally embraced, and he said he would write to Cardwell, upon whom I agreed to call to-morrow. I then, after telegraphing you, went to Chester Square, telling F. L., and agreeing to dine there this evening, and then on to De Grey, who was most cordial and pleased. I breakfasted with him this morning, and he also was much pleased with my speech, which, judging from the leaders in the *Daily News* and *Star*, has been a hit. Certainly my appointment immediately after this speech commits the Government on reform."

On the following day he took possession of his room at the Colonial Office, and did his first day's work there on Monday, November 27th. He records in his diary that the time was chiefly spent in looking through enclosures in the last

Jamaica despatches. Two days later he notes that there is "very bad news from Jamaica of slaughter by the troops and under martial law," and that he has been busy for many hours reading the despatches. This bad news referred to the rising of the negroes and to the severe and relentless steps taken by Mr. Eyre, the governor, for the purpose of restoring order. The country, before many weeks were over, was deeply agitated by the discussion raised, not so much by the negro rising, as by the measures adopted for its suppression. Of these the most noticeable was the seizure by the governor of Mr. Gordon, a half-caste member of the House of Assembly, who had long been known as a sympathizer with the negro party in the island. Martial law had been proclaimed on the outbreak of the disturbance in the districts affected by it. Mr. Gordon, however, had taken no active part in the insurrection, nor was any complicity in any acts of violence ever brought home to him. At the time of the rising he was residing in Kingston, where the civil law was still in force. Despite this fact, he was arbitrarily arrested by Mr. Eyre, and transported to one of the districts in which martial law had been proclaimed. He was there tried by a court-martial composed of three young officers, found guilty, sentenced to death, and forthwith hanged. This extraordinary act, justified by the adherents of Governor Eyre on the old plea that the safety of

the State is the supreme law, excited a bitter demonstration of hostility in this country, and loud demands were made for the removal from his office of one who had so singularly violated all constitutional laws.

It was unfortunate for Mr. Forster that almost in the first days of his official life he should have to deal with such a question. No one, of course, who had studied his past career, could have any doubt as to the strength and the genuineness of his sympathy with the native population of Jamaica. All through his life he had ranged himself on the side of the subject races of the civilized world, and he was not likely to desert them now. But he was quite new to office, and he had, as his chief, in Mr. Cardwell a man holding high rank in the Cabinet and exercising great influence over the Prime Minister and Mr. Gladstone. Still Mr. Forster's opinions were not without their due weight in the Ministry. The Government resolved, within a fortnight of the receipt of the first news of Mr. Gordon's execution, to send out a Commission of Inquiry to Jamaica, a determination which was strongly supported by Mr. Forster himself. The principal members of the Commission were Sir Henry Storks, Mr. Russell Gurney, and Mr. Maule. With the appointment of this Commission the political events of 1865 came to an end.

To MR. ELLIS YARNALL.

"Colonial Office, London, January 17th, 1866.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"You will have heard of my acceptance of office under Lord Russell's Ministry, and I have now been hard at work for several weeks. It was curious that my first official experience should be this sad Jamaica business, which I have felt, as you may imagine, a most anxious matter; but I am fully satisfied with all that the Government has done in the business since I joined it.

"Would that your Southerners could take warning by Jamaica—most of whose misfortune may, I think, be placed to the efforts of the employers, after emancipation, to obtain labour by law cheaper and on more stringent conditions than the market price and conditions, after they had lost the power of getting it by the task. All their attempts to evade the laws of supply and demand defeat themselves, and merely result in mutual class injuries and class feuds or drive the labourers away. . . .

"Believe me to remain,

"Yours ever faithfully,

"W. E. FORSTER."

CHAPTER X.

REFORM—VISIT TO THE EAST.

Mr. Forster's career at the Colonial Office was of short duration. The Russell-Gladstone administration justified his confidence in the sincerity of its feelings on the reform question by bringing in the well-known measure which, if not very far-reaching, was at least entitled to the epithet bestowed upon it by Mr. Bright of "an honest bill;" and, after a fierce battle in the House of Commons, in the course of which Mr. Lowe won remarkable distinction by the brilliancy and the bitterness of the invective with which he assailed the Government and the reform party, the Administration was defeated and retired from office in the month of July. Yet, brief as was his experience at the Colonial Office, it was of great value to Mr. Forster. His friend, Harriet Martineau, in writing to Mrs. Arnold to congratulate her upon his appointment, observed that "of course there were evils in all great changes, but she hoped that in his acceptance of a post in the Ministry the good would predominate. When I feel for him

the loss of freedom, and for ourselves the loss of so many free speeches on various topics," she wrote, "I turn to the fact that this is an indispensable passage to power, and to more freedom, though not entire, and to the thought of what he may be able to do for Jamaica and the North American colonies, and to how he may keep Mr. Cardwell up to the mark. I have no doubt of his showing the country what a man's work *may* be under the stimulus of such a conscience and such a heart as his."

The Jamaica question was undoubtedly one of great difficulty and perplexity. Mr. Forster, as has been seen, had barely entered upon office when this storm suddenly burst upon the heads of the Ministry with something like tropical violence. It was, of course, impossible that one in his subordinate position, newly entering upon official life, could have his own way in dealing with so grave a problem. To what length he would have gone in order to pacify public feeling in England it would now be unprofitable to inquire. He clearly approved, however, of the steps taken by Lord Russell and Mr. Cardwell in recalling Governor Eyre, under the condemnation of a severe censure, and in refusing to undertake a criminal prosecution against him. There were many philanthropists, who had been accustomed to look to Mr. Forster as one of the foremost exponents of their special opinions, who were indignant because Ministers refused to place a distinguished public servant, who

had been guilty of a deplorable error of judgment, at the bar of the Old Bailey, and many of these could not understand how Mr. Forster, whose sympathies with the subject and native population were so real and intense, could refuse to listen to their demand for vengeance upon Governor Eyre. They were not slow to pour their censures upon his head. It would have been an easy matter for Mr. Forster to have sheltered himself behind the perfectly truthful plea that the colonial policy of the Government was directed, not by himself, but by Mr. Cardwell; but this would have been utterly distasteful to him, and he quickly made it known that he entirely approved of the refusal of the Colonial Secretary to sanction Mr. Eyre's prosecution.

Writing to a friend, October 31st, 1866, with reference to the attacks which were being made upon him in connection with the Jamaica question, he says, "I send you Goldwin Smith's letter in case you have not read it. It is irksome enough, this compulsory Quakerism of my present position, obliging me to take any number of newspaper hits without return; and these, too, on the raw, as I am more sensitive on the negro question than any other. I think, however, I could reply to Goldwin Smith. For instance, he must never have read, or have forgotten, my speech on C. Buxton's motion, because there I answered by anticipation the question to which he says I should give a distinct

reply, inasmuch as I was the only speaker in the debate who demanded the vindication of Gordon's memory in satisfaction of his wife's petition. How he can suppose I meant to defend Adderley or the present Government, I cannot imagine, inasmuch as I answered Adderley in debate, and at Bradford began my speech by confining it to my reasons for agreeing with Cardwell, first in recalling Eyre, and next in not prosecuting him. This reminds me of one of our West Riding Liberal electioneers, who, when charged with making an unfounded attack on a Tory, said, 'Any stone was good enough to throw at a blue dog.' *A fortiori*, Goldwin Smith may think a Liberal Under-Secretary good enough to throw at his Tory successor. Again, he says that the most violent theories on martial law say that its jurisdiction is limited by necessity. On the contrary, every lawyer I have seen tells me that it is limited, not by the actual necessity, but, to use Cardwell's words, quoted from his law adviser in his despatch, 'by the belief of the governor, reasonably entertained, that they were necessary.' Here lies the whole pinch of the matter. I think that Eyre, using his reason as best he could, did entertain the belief that the acts he committed and sanctioned were necessary. Undoubtedly these acts were not necessary, and to our judgment were unreasonable, or rather the reasons which weighed with Eyre and almost all the other whites in the island are to our minds

altogether insufficient. But surely it is not fair to put a man in the position of governor not by law, but by his belief in necessity, and then to prosecute him because he acted according to such belief? It appears to me that when once we admit that Eyre was justified in declaring martial law, which means in abolishing law, we take his acts out of the province of law, and therefore of prosecution, unless we can show them to have been reckless or malicious. We can recall him as unfit; we can censure him as a fool; but we have no right to punish him as a criminal; for his reply would be, 'You say I did right in putting my discretion in place of law; you allow that these acts against which you complain were acts of discretion; you say that these acts were in themselves bad. Well, then, you have a right to recall and censure me, as unfit for my place and as governing badly; but you have no right to punish me as a criminal, for doing, after all, what I thought to be my duty.' . . . Well, then, what I think ought to be done, and what I did my best to do, is not prosecute the governor for bad government in the exercise of his discretion, but (1) recall him; (2) prosecute every one against whom there is *primâ facie* evidence of bad faith; (3) take care that no future governor be in Eyre's position. . . . Send me back Goldwin Smith's letter. It is personally civil; only tells me I am a fool, not a rogue or official hack. Heaven knows the position of an under-secretary, with his

chief in the Commons, was not so desirable that I was tempted to sell the negro to retain it! The temptation (and I felt it) was the other way—to seize a good excuse for getting out. But I do not much mind the sneers about office, of which there are enough from others. There are not many things for which I cannot reproach myself, but the not having a constant, anxious, painful desire to do my duty to the negro and Jamaica during my six months at the Colonial Office is not one of them."

It was the reform question, however, which absorbed that session of 1866, during which he first occupied a seat on the Treasury Bench. Needless to say, there were discussions in the Ministry as well as outside of it. Forster's influence within the Government was always used on the side of the reformers.

To his Wife.

"Colonial Office, January 11th, 1866.

"I wish I could find time to write thee fully; but it is not easy to do so. I have delivered my mind on reform. I spoke strongly yesterday to De Grey, Cardwell, and Gibson, telling them I believed the Government and the Reform Bill would fall from want of substance, with the £6 rating, and that if they were to be upset they had better be upset on *something*. Gibson told me nothing had been decided on, but quite wished me to see Johnny (Lord Russell). So I wrote

him the accompanying note to-day, to which he appointed to see me at 1.45, just before the Cabinet meeting. He received me very cordially, for him, and told me nothing had been fixed. Cardwell sent down to me this morning to come up to an interview which would have interested you. Seymour, the new Governor of British Columbia, with Sir E. Head, discussing the union of British Columbia and Vancouver's Island, and their new constitution. Certainly the colonial business is intensely interesting, and I have no wish to change it for the Vice-Presidency of the Board of Trade."

To his Wife.

"I have had an interesting day. I went with Gibson to Gladstone at ten, and talked hard with him till almost twelve. He was very free and cordial, and let me talk as much as he lets any one; but he does as much of the talking as Johnny does little. I went over the reform question with him, up and down, and I think he really took in what I said."

During the course of the session he spoke in the House of Commons on the Government bill, and was strenuous in his defence of the ministerial proposals. The defeat and resignation of Lord Russell transferred the reform battle from the floor of Parliament to the country. Mr. Forster

gave up his place at the Colonial Office to Mr. Adderley, Lord Derby having become Prime Minister, and regained his old position of independence.

He did not fail to make use of it during the autumn, which was a period of almost continuous agitation. The hero of the agitation was undoubtedly Mr. Bright. The member for Birmingham, disgusted by the intrigues which had brought about the defeat of the honest measure of Lord Russell, left the House declaring that he would appeal to the country against its decision, and call in the grand council of the nation to overrule the declarations of Parliament. He kept his promise in a remarkable way. The series of great demonstrations in favour of a radical measure of reform which took place during the autumn, and at which Mr. Bright was the principal speaker, stand out in lonely pre-eminence among all similar movements of recent times. Never were demonstrations better organized; never were they more successful in arousing the enthusiasm of the community, and never were they more effective in bringing about the desired end. The summer in London had been a stormy one in a political sense. The attempt on the part of Ministers to prevent a meeting of working men in Hyde Park had been hotly resented by the democratic leaders of the metropolis. The mob had successfully defied the police, and a great defeat had been inflicted upon the authorities. There were fears

among the more timid spirits in London of a period of revolutionary disturbance; and when Mr. Bright began the great agitation of the autumn he was sharply rebuked, not merely by the Tory members, but by some of the more prominent organs of the Whig party, as a person whose action was a danger to the peace of the commonwealth. Yet never was an agitation of this description more entirely legitimate in its methods as well as in its aims.

Whether it was at Birmingham, at Manchester, at Leeds, at Glasgow, or in London, the reform demonstration was always carried on upon the same lines. During the afternoon of the day fixed for it a great mass meeting was held in the open air at some convenient spot. Thousands and tens of thousands of working-men, anxious to proclaim their determination to win admission within the pale of the Constitution, marched in procession to the appointed place of meeting. There they were divided by their marshals into three or four distinct groups, and each group being gathered round a platform of its own, was addressed by its own special speaker. At a given moment the speaking ceased, and a resolution demanding the introduction of a Reform Bill was carried by the whole of the vast multitude. Then, having accomplished their part of the task, the working-men returned in peace and order to their own homes. On the evening of the same day a public meeting was

held in the largest hall available for the purpose, and at this meeting Mr. Bright was invariably the principal speaker. Those who, like the present writer, heard the whole series of speeches delivered by Mr. Bright in 1866 can never forget the impression which he produced by his impassioned pleading on behalf of the nation without votes, and by his strenuous denunciation of the treachery and cowardice of those who, wearing the Liberal uniform, had in the last session betrayed the Liberal cause. Steadily and certainly the tide of public opinion swelled higher and higher in favour of reform, and before Mr. Bright completed the great task which he had set himself, it was known to everybody that Ministers had no choice but to accept the verdict of the country.

One of the greatest of these demonstrations was that which was held on October 8th, at Leeds. The men of the West Riding were of course among the foremost of those who demanded the enlargement of the franchise, and Mr. Bright had an enthusiastic reception from his Yorkshire friends. But those who were present on the occasion recall the fact that even the reception accorded to Mr. Bright did not exceed in its enthusiasm that which was enjoyed by the member for Bradford. Mr. Forster spoke not merely in the Town Hall at the evening meeting, but from one of the waggons which served as platforms at the great gathering on Woodhouse Moor. And here one

may remark, in parenthesis, that no public man of his time was ever less of a stickler for his own dignity than Mr. Forster. Those who have had any experience in organizing public meetings, especially meetings of the character of this reform demonstration at Leeds, cannot be ignorant of the difficulties thrown in their way by the anxiety of rival politicians to get the best positions for themselves, and above all to do nothing which may seem to the outside world to be derogatory to their position in public life. At that time it was undoubtedly believed by most persons that no man who had attained any position in Parliament ought to speak at one of these open-air meetings. The speaking there was left almost entirely in the hands of the leaders of the working classes, and of ardent local Radicals. Mr. Bright, for example, always kept aloof from these open air gatherings, although his name was the most potent influence in bringing them together. Mr. Forster had ceased to be a mere independent member. He enjoyed the reputation and authority belonging to an ex-Minister, and he might well have excused himself in the circumstances from speaking at the open air demonstration at Leeds. But he saw an opportunity for usefulness, and he was only too glad to avail himself of it. He spoke, therefore, on Woodhouse Moor, as well as at the evening meeting which was addressed by Mr. Bright, and he was the only man of his position in political

life who, during that autumn agitation, took this course. Those who remember this fact can understand how it was that even Mr. Bright did not receive a more enthusiastic welcome in Leeds than that which was given to Mr. Forster.

In his speech at the evening meeting there was one passage which deserves to be quoted, as it was something more than a shrewd guess at the subsequent course of events: "They were all determined, whatever their theories might be, to work hard and unitedly, until they had forced the Government of the day, whatever that Government might be, to bring forward a really practical Reform Bill. He said the Government of the day, because he was not one of those who wished to lay it down as utterly impossible that the present Government could bring forward a satisfactory Reform Bill. They had a right to look upon that Government with the utmost possible suspicion, remembering, as they did, that such men as General Peel and Lord Cranborne, who had declared themselves opposed to all concessions to the working classes, were leading members of the Government, and that their supporters were the two hundred and odd members who had cheered Mr. Lowe when he calumniated the working classes. But they must not forget that they had a man of very great talent as their leader in the House of Commons, a man who marked the signs of the times and knew well what ought to be done.

Mr. Disraeli had obtained notoriety by fastening himself upon Sir Robert Peel, because he sacrificed his party to that which he believed to be the good of his country in the repeal of the corn laws. It was not impossible that Mr. Disraeli might intend to close his career by striving to copy Sir Robert Peel in making such a sacrifice. They might be quite sure that neither Mr. Disraeli nor any one else, and even less Mr. Disraeli than any other man, because they remembered the bill he brought forward before, would have the slightest chance of settling that question if he did not bring forward a more liberal bill than Mr. Gladstone's, a greater concession to the public rights. They must judge whatever measure was brought forward by its merits, and it mattered little who it came from, whether from old friends or from old foes; but he was quite sure that such demonstrations as they had had that day had made it utterly impossible that it would not soon be settled."

A few weeks later Mr. Forster delivered his annual address to his constituents, and devoted himself almost exclusively to the question of reform. There were still, it must be remembered, those on the Liberal side who, if not opposed to any extension of the franchise, were at all events filled with apprehension at the thought that some sweeping measure of reform might be introduced which would practically confer votes upon the whole of the working classes. Mr. Forster devoted

himself in his speech to the task of combating the fears of such persons. An old advocate of manhood suffrage, though he had learned from experience to limit his aspirations, he was still bent upon obtaining the utmost possible concession from those in authority. He declared that it would no longer be possible to bring forward a bill so limited and moderate as that of Lord Russell, and he besought all classes of Liberals to unite in securing a real and honest measure of reform. He held up before those whom he addressed the American Constitution, with its freedom and its broad foundation, as an example of what might be accomplished if the leaders of the nation were willing to give the fullest possible extension of its liberties; "and yet further," he added, "it is in our power to outstrip America in the race. There are possibilities of freedom, not only under our beloved Monarch, but, whoever be the occupant of the throne, under our Constitutional Limited Monarchy, which there are not under their suddenly changing presidents; and I will go further and admit, nay I will affirm, that our nobility can bring to the service of their country a power of usefulness, as many of them have done, greater than where there is no class with leisure for high culture and for the acquisition of varied knowledge of men and things. But whatever may be our advantages, whatever may be the disadvantages of America, America will beat us in

the race for freedom, if for much longer millions of Englishmen are forced to feel themselves deprived of their citizenship; aliens in the land of their birth, because they have not those rights which the history of their country teaches them ought to be theirs. Let us, then, all join together in this great and good work of turning those aliens into citizens; let capitalists and labourers, employers and employed, throw away their jealousies and suspicions and help in this work. I fully believe that, in as far as they perform it, they will find their reward, in discovering that even those jealousies and suspicions will melt away and cease to exist. Ay! and let our ancient aristocracy, casting behind them their foolish fears of the people, and remembering how in former days their fathers fought and strove for their and our freedom, also join us in this work, and in this goodly enterprise take their natural place as leaders of the people."

Such words as these were very gratifying to the ardent Liberals of Bradford; and yet already there were the first signs of a little rift within the lute so far as the relations between Mr. Forster and his constituents were concerned. At the close of this speech he was taken to task because of his action with regard to Governor Eyre, and from that time forward there was always in Bradford a certain number of men who regarded him with suspicion, not because they could find in any single instance

any betrayal of principle on his part, but because as a responsible minister of the Crown he was not at all times ready to lend his aid in securing what they believed to be the natural fruits of those principles which they and he held in common.

The session of 1867 witnessed the great surrender of the Tory party on the question of reform, and the passing of the Household Suffrage Bill, with which the name of Mr. Disraeli will always be associated. Forster took an active part, not merely in the debates in the House, but in the private conferences of the Liberal party in regard to the measure. Whilst the bill was still in a state of transition in the House of Commons, he received the following letter from Lord Russell—a document which would seem to justify the friends of the great Whig statesman in claiming for him the merit of having proposed a real household suffrage before Mr. Disraeli himself resorted to it.

To MR. FORSTER.

"Pembroke Lodge, Richmond Park,
"April 25th, 1867.

"DEAR MR. FORSTER,

"I agree with you that Gladstone's amendment having been thrown out, the struggle of reformers ought to be to obtain a real household suffrage without personal payment of rates. The present Bill gives not, indeed, a hard and fast line, but a line fluctuating between £8 or £9 for

the compound householder, and £1 or £3 for the poor man whose rates are paid by the election agent. . . .

"Yours truly,

"RUSSELL."

Writing in 1885 to the Rev. W. Heaton, Leeds, Forster thus explained the circumstances under which the above letter was addressed to him. He himself had from the first favoured household suffrage pure and simple, whilst the object of Mr. Gladstone and the other official Liberals had been to get rid of ratepaying restrictions and to secure a £5 franchise. Mr. Gladstone had, however, been defeated on his first amendment, and Forster then urged upon Lord Russell the importance of a united movement in favour of household suffrage. The result of Lord Russell's letter was a conference of Liberal leaders, at which it was resolved to support household suffrage pure and simple, and in the end this was won from the Tory Government.

During the autumn Mr. Forster's usual holiday trip took the shape of a tour down the Danube to Constantinople and Asia Minor. It was his first peep at the East, and it made a deep impression upon him. The following extracts from his letters describe the more interesting portions of his tour. His companion on this, as on a former occasion, was Mr. John Ball.

"Hotel d'Angleterre, Pera,
"Tuesday evening, October 1st, 1867.

"Here we are in great comfort, having arrived this morning about half-past ten. Just after writing my last letter from the Danube steamer, I found I had misdated it Saturday, the 28th, instead of Sunday, the 29th. We left the steamer at Rustchuk about half-past twelve that night, and found clean beds in a small railway hotel kept by a German, and by help of encompassing myself with my dear plaid I kept tolerably warm. At a quarter to eight the next morning we were off by the Varna railway, which, though advertised for every day, only runs two or three times a week, and would vastly move the contempt of the boys. It is an English company, and it was strange to see the rough practical Englishmen among the dignified Turks and wild savage Bulgarians, both equally lazy, and the little stone stations among the Bulgarian mud huts. It was a savage ride over a spur of the Balkan; the country burnt up, the trees, or rather brushwood, with leaves changed or gone from the sun and snow; no enclosures, and hardly a town, but villages like beaver-huts, herds of buffaloes, and every now and then long trains of arabas (wicker waggons), bound with country produce to some market, in single file along the unmade tracks, or gipsy-like encampments bivouacking round the carts. There was no hotel either at Varna or on the road, but a restaurant

in the train, from which we got cold mutton and cheese, and good Varna wine and excellent grapes. It was very cold till we got over the Balkans, but then much milder, though we heard there had been snow at Varna. . . . H—— says Achmet has hope in his country, having hope in himself, but no one else has. The sense of doom is over the land. The Sultan is morose, obstinate, childish in his extravagance, half enraged and half frightened at the sense of danger, from which his ignorance no longer shields him. His ministers, Fuad and Company, are either incompetent or clever only for their own corrupt interests. Of Fuad especially I hear the worst stories. The few faithful adherents of the Sultan, his personal servants, ask in helpless resignation what is to become of them. The Greeks are all actively and cleverly intriguing, and—most ominous sign of all—the Turkish people are getting enough knowledge to feel and hate their bad government, and to wish for any change, even for a Christian rule, which would make them hewers of wood and drawers of water, like the Tartars in Russia. It is sad to see a people under its doom."

Mr. Forster and Mr. Ball determined to journey overland from Broussa to Smyrna; then, as now, a somewhat perilous expedition, owing to the character of the inhabitants of the country. The first adventure which Mr. Forster had was in

climbing Mount Olympus, and an account of it will be found in the following correspondence :—

"October 12th.

"Well, at last, my dearest, my wish for a purely Eastern scene may be said to be satisfied. Time: a quarter-past seven p.m.; moonlight outside; two tallow candles within. Scene: a large square room, with a Turkey carpet and a cushioned divan; no chairs or tables; the village priest with his white turban and long beard squatted on one side; self in the corner scribbling; near me the son of my host, Sadih Oghi Mehemet Aga, the rich man of the place, to whom I am sent by the conjoint conspiracy of the governor or sous-prefet of the town and of the consul, who gave me a letter of introduction. Next to the son, Antonia, and next to him my kavass, a *beau ideal* of a Bashi-bazouk, fierce enough in all conscience, but not bad-looking. A few minutes ago you might have seen us at the supper of the house: a cloth spread upon a stool in a corner of the divan; upon that an old round salver, not badly ornamented, and then a succession of dishes—soup and onion salad, curd and some vegetable, some mess of Indian corn with sugar, very good, finishing with pilau and a dessert of grapes and water melon. I was furnished with my own plate and spoon, but every one else, priest included, dug into the dish with spoon or hands;—not every one else, only the

gentility, for a tall Nubian, the slave of the house, was holding the candle, grinning with great glee, and my Bashi-bazouk was also practising waiting in order to enjoy the fun.

"'But where is Ball?' you will ask. Alas! this morning he said that, after much pondering, he was most reluctantly compelled to believe that he ought not to go further into the interior, his chest giving threats of his old complaint, from which he has had two really dangerous attacks of inflammation of the lungs. I had great doubt whether to return with him and give up Kutaya, but I decided to go on. My health is good, and I have complete confidence in Antonio, and probably I shall never again have such a chance of gratifying two longings—really seeing and feeling the East, and travelling in untravelled lands. Had Ball to return to Constantinople by himself I should not have hesitated to go with him, but he returns with the Powells, and will therefore be in better care than mine.

"We all started together at eight this morning, and about ten we parted, they making for Missihour on their way to Nicea, and I skirting the spurs of Olympus, through wooded glens to this my first sleeping-place, meeting train after train with camels loaded with grain, with the camel-driver on his donkey at their head. We passed through only one village, Aksa (White Water), where we baited, stopping at a Turkish

café. The inmates were vastly interested, almost excited, by my making my beef tea in my Rob Roy *cuisine*. Tell darling Flo that all my dodges came into play. My mattress and indiarubber rug were invaluable in the tent, and will, I expect, be very welcome to-night for the couch of my good host; and I regularly use both bath and basin. My party are my kavass; as I said, one of the pasha's Bashi-bazouks, a riding armoury, with a double-barrelled gun, a long sword and a dagger, and two pistols, and his charges of powder encircling him; our surragee, a pleasant Armenian, recommended by the American missionary, leading the baggage-horse, five horses in all. My steed, a sweet-expressioned light bay pony, hardly up to my weight, but doing its best. Our journey to-day was about eight hours' actual riding, from thirty to thirty-five miles. The country parched, but naturally very rich; almost entirely uncultivated. The camel trains and the bullocks and buffaloes dragging the springless carts feeding where they or their drivers pleased. We saw some goats and sheep, but horses and cows seemed the wealth of the peasants. Close to this village we came upon hundreds of them driven by one lame keeper. On entering the village we rode straight to the governor's house. Antonio strode up to present my firman, and soon I followed, making my way through guards and prisoners in chains. The village despot was a fat, bloated Turk, with blue spectacles, who after long

spelling through the firman, or making attempts thereat, for I do not believe any one as yet has actually read it, received me most graciously, giving us coffee and cigarettes (I did my duty to them manfully), and ordering hospitality to be provided for us. Of course this might be a great oppression, but I hope I shall make it a pleasure to my hosts."

"Sunday, 4 p.m., Bazardjik.

"Governor's house—of which I have taken possession—a large mud hovel, its only furniture a divan bench in the room and two wooden chairs. Antonio is much shocked, but I am so well prepared that all I want is a clean-swept uncarpeted room, which I see I can get if allowed to condescend to it; and I am now quite happy thinking of thee and of you all, and glowing after a head and foot wash in my two basins, a somewhat perilous undertaking, as I feared the arrival of his Excellency and my introduction to him during the process. Out of the window I think I see the governor, with his black slave behind him, and Antonio is gone out, so I am speechless to explain.

"*Tuesday, October 15th, Kutayah (Kossuth's residence).*—The approach of the governor was a false alarm, but Antonio soon arrived, saying I must be off to look at some ruins, of which he had tidings from a Greek (Antonio's zeal in ruin hunting is intense, as becomes a native of Eleusis), near

Salamis; and away we trudged about three-quarters of an hour to the north, where we found traces of an old town in brick and marble, and excavations, and one long broken column. As we returned through the fields, where the camels were grazing with their packs on their backs, we met the governor, who came to see after us—a young Turk, fat and jovial, and most hospitable. He and Antonio insisted on parading me round the village, escorted by the oldest inhabitants, to see every inscription and column or slab by lantern-light, till I regretted the rash excuse I had given for my journeyings, that I was a ruin seeker. After that we had a merry dinner. The governor, only a sub-governor after all, dosing me with mastic, helping me to pull a chicken to pieces, drinking my wine, greatly amused at my tea-making, and liking it well flavoured with cognac, and last of all making my bed, which he insisted on spreading under his divan.

"Yesterday morning we were off by seven, sending on the luggage with the kavass, and riding with the governor and a well-to-do Turk of the place to see some other ruins to the south. There is, after all, a melancholy strangeness to feel that there may be traces of an old city in any thicket or thistle field. This delayed us two hours, but the governor insisted on escorting us till we overtook our luggage, about eleven, at a guard-house in a lovely fresh ravine, just as we

turned south up the mountains, and we had a parting repast on bread and grapes, I giving my share of bread to the pony to comfort him for the extra labour of ruin hunting. Our road then was up a high wooded hill on to the central platform, upon which we shall now be for days, with mountains indeed interspersed, but nowhere under two thousand five hundred feet; a wild austere country, with enormous forests on its skirts, and desert-looking moors in the interior. We found ourselves obliged to stop about three o'clock at Turturhar, a mountain village, nearly four thousand feet high, of log huts and one or two mud cottages. Here we had to rough it. A room in the coffee shop was swept out for me, and after a walk up a neighbouring hill, wearing my loaded pistol, and supping on my own soup and beef tea and a thrush that Said, the kavass, had shot, I tried to write, but gave it up, there being neither table, bench, nor chair, and went to bed on my rug and mattress, wrapping them round me to save me from the fleas. As yet I have been saved. I found none at either Agnegol or the governor's, and last night my precautions were effectual, not only casing myself in indiarubber, but putting all my clothes in my large bath. Antonio said he found thousands, and the kavass signified the same to me by vigorous scratches.

"We were up about half-past three, and off by half-past five—it takes a long time to get off—

and reached this type of a Turkish town about half-past two. The approach to it is very striking; an enormous ruined castle climbing the long range of scarred limestone hills which faced us, and the town, with its trees and mosques, resting under it with a look of beauty sadly belied by the dirty streets, which are, however, rather above the average of Turkish towns. Two or three miles from the town we met a procession, characteristic but touching. Two Bashi-bazouks, driving before them two prisoners, an old man on horseback chained to a fine-looking youth; walking by their side two women in white veils and cloaks, one of them, probably the youth's mother, helping him to bear the heavy burden of his chain, and an old man, probably his father, riding at their head on a donkey. And so they trudged on slowly and silently, bound I suppose, to Broussa, or perhaps to Stamboul.

"We rode all through the streets of the town to the governor's konak, a large building with pretentious steps, with an enormous hall filled with servants and armed men. We were ushered into a waiting-room, where squatted a secretary on his bench before his table, and waited till Antonio thought that my dignity required that the pasha should be sent for. Happily, however, he came, a most dignified and courteous old gentleman, who led me up a large long staircase to a spacious divan, holding my hand all the time, where we did fine

speeches, coffee, and cigarettes for the due time—not short, I can assure you—and then with the pasha's approval, rooms were ordered for us at an Armenian merchant's, Stephen Aga, to whom I had also a letter from the consul. Nothing can exceed the hospitality of the old gentleman; cups of mastic or the best raki; pieces of delicious water-melon, brought to me at the end of a fork; an excellent dinner, with very good wine. The squire of the place, Emis Effendi, with whom I have formed an everlasting friendship, asked to meet me, and his three sons waiting on us at dinner, and now a clean-looking couch waiting for me to get into it, and I think I must go to it, my dearest, for I am tired enough, with little or no sleep last night—with travelling, and, not least of all, with having so constantly to keep up my company manners and try to make up for want of speech by attention of bearing and gestures. I am, however, in perfect health, and look forward to a prosperous arrival at Smyrna about this day week. I fear it will be impossible to do so before. I hear the weekly post leaves this place for Stamboul to-morrow, so I shall risk sending it to the care of the British postmaster to forward. . . .

"6 *a.m.*, *Wednesday*.—Antonio has lighted my candle, and I finish my note from my couch, for this mansion, though it boasts a very small table, has no chair. My night has been—for this land of floor beds and howling dogs and shrieking Arabs

—very good, and we are off about eight for the ruins of Azain, and then *viâ* Ghed to Ushah, Kula, Philadelphia, and Sardis to Cassaba, where we take rail for Smyrna, where I hope to find Ball and the P——s and thy dear letters, and I trust a telegram. I am sorry to say I lose my kavass here—an old Crimean soldier of fifty, with the eye and glee of a boy—the pasha wishing to give me one of his own; but I take on my good, honoured Broussa surragee, and my pony, of whom I am quite fond, and I find Antonio very able, attentive, and pleasant."

"House of Hadji Ibrahim Effendi.

"*Thursday evening, October 17th.*—Would that I could describe to thee my entrance to this mansion, up a hill steeper than Haworth, between narrow lanes, escorted by the governor's armed but barefooted servant to a large wooden house; up the steps, in an upstairs hall with a large bow window, but with no glass, was the principal divan, and standing on the carpet were two tall Turks, both with long white beards, one with a drab, the other with a blue fur pelisse. They received me with stately welcome. I take off my shoes and curl myself on the divan as best I may, and a slow and solemn talk ensues. When very hard pressed, I try one of my dodges—the never-failing wonder of my bath, or my *cuisine*, or my alpenstock. But this time my revolver, spectacles, and opera-glass

sufficed. My present host is, in a dignified fashion, inquisitive. 'How much do I get a month from my Government as a member of Parliament?' The explanation that I am chosen by the people to assist the Queen not satisfactory. 'How many children have I?' 'None.' 'Why am I so foolish as not to take many wives?' 'I love my wife too much.' 'I have adopted four children—children of my wife's brother.' All very unsatisfactory. In the midst of inquiries a sudden pause, and my host and his brother say their prayers, kneeling on the divan towards Mecca, and kissing the ground many times. I sit silent, with my head bowed, which evidently produces a favourable impression. Dinner follows, and I bravely abstain from fork or plate or any Western aid, and stick to my one wooden spoon and my fingers, with which I pull out my roast meat; but then, after dinner, comes a slave with soap and water and a napkin. Then comes another solemn talk, assisted by one or two notorieties of the town, until about a quarter-past seven. Antonio, much oppressed with his interpreting duties, suggests bed, but not before I was fully posted with the question, 'What present did our Queen give the Sultan?' On the whole, however, I got off well, and besides the usual shower of compliments, have the special one of 'pleasure to see me, because I am so quiet and gentlemanly.' All this is at first amusing, and gives much insight into life; but I begin to long for the relaxation of

an inn. Seeing no women gives a very strange feeling. At Kutaya I only saw the daughter of my host for a moment, looking at the stranger from a side door as I drove off. The Bazardjik governor had no wife or harem; but in the other abodes there has been no trace whatever of womankind, either in sight or hearing.

"My rides, both yesterday and to-day, have been most interesting. After a breakfast on excellent Turkish cream and sugar we left Kutaya about nine o'clock, climbing a narrow ravine to a height of nearly five thousand feet, and then through scanty sprinklings of pine and cyprus and forest trees of the brightest autumn tints, crossing one dried-up valley after another, with much cultivation, but seemingly no cultivators, till we looked down upon a large plain or basin, seemingly a sandy desert, but really parched up cornfields (they have had no rain for five months), surrounded by ranges of mountains with steep sides and round peaks, wooded, if you examine them, but looking austere and arid, and in the midst, some eight or ten miles off, a green oasis of trees; the few huts—hardly visible—of the village on the site of the great city of Azani, and standing up in solitary grandeur the grand Temple of Jupiter. We reached Azani about four, and I had a most memorable walk by myself, first to the temple and then to the enormous hippodrome and amphitheatre, and, sitting on the royal

seat looking down the theatre and stadium upon the gloriously beautiful pillars of the temple in the still autumn evening, with the solemn hills encircling me, I felt as though I learned the lesson of the emptiness of man's fuss as I never had before. Coming back, I went to a well where some women were hoisting, by a rude wooden crane, out of a beautifully sculptured circlet, a wooden tub of water. I went with my horn to get some. They ran away, huddling up their faces, and when I left, returned, laughing in scorn, and one of them, I think, sent a stone after the infidel. We were, however, most hospitably received by the owner of the best house in the place; poor enough, but not without attempts at real comfort, and built, I heard, solely to receive strangers, his own house and harem being behind. Antonio and I this morning took a careful survey of the ruins. There are sixteen columns of the temple still standing, ten feet in circumference and about thirty feet high, and some of the cornices are hardly touched. The walls and seats and doors of the theatre are some of them wonderfully perfect. For the third time since I have been in Asia I saw perched on them many storks, attracted, I suppose, by the river Ryndacus, not quite dried up.

"We started about ten, and after a scorchingly hot ride among really grand mountains, making the pass which divides the watershed between the

Black Sea and the Archipelago, resting our horses and taking coffee at a guard-house in a pine forest, we reached this place about four o'clock—an Asiatic Yeadon, which looks as though it might burn down in an hour, as I hear Ushah, our next sleeping-place—where the best carpets are made—was burnt down a few weeks ago.

"*Sunday, October 20th.*—Would that I had not lost all describing power, for really some of the scenes I have witnessed are worth describing. For instance, about eleven, in the fierce heat, we came to the mud village of Kuneh, up a very steep mound. We trot to the governor's office—a covered mud balcony. The governor is not in. Antonio wishes to send on a kavass to prepare a sleeping-place for the great 'Bey Ingeleez,' and to quicken the natives, storms and stamps his feet. Meantime a cushion is spread in the corner of the balcony, upon which his beyship reclines in sublime patience, as though utterly indifferent whether or no he spends the rest of his days at Kuneh. Patience is rewarded by a cup of good black coffee, which always springs most unaccountably out of the mud. Antonio produces a cold chicken, and while gnawing it, I hear guns. 'What are they, Antonio?' 'Villagers coming back from the tomb of a khalif, where they have been praying for rain.' Soon they appear, horse and foot, the men armed with matchlocks and swords, and one or two veiled women, and under my mound they gallop

round their horses and discharge their guns as though at one another, and dance one couple and another in a ring, wildly but gracefully; and some of them come up to the balcony and squat round the stranger, and look like pleased children through my opera-glass. They may well long for rain. This white granite and black basalt and volcanic country is burnt up like a desert; the dust on the fields deep as sand; the underwood generally as though a fire had swept over it; the watercourses dried up. Imagine, then, the beauty of coming to a river too strong for the drought, the Hermus, with green banks and green oak-trees overhanging them, and the flocks of the Turcomans sleeping or grazing on them—beautiful white sheep and glossy black, or white, or grey goats. The Turcomans roam, Bedouin-like, over this country, and seem to me rich in pastoral wealth of horses and cows, and goats and sheep, and some of them a few camels. While baiting at a guard-house on Friday, between Ghediz and Ushah, I went into one of their black tents, not without signs of comfort in curled-up carpets and beds; the women not veiled, and a big, strapping, handsome girl had a tame partridge-looking bird in a cage. The Bashi-bazouks on guard begged us to go to look at one of their number, himself a Turcoman, who had been ill for seven months. We found the poor fellow stretched in his small tent, with his wife and mother and handsome son attending him. I

satisfied myself he was not ill of ague or fever, and, so far as I could make out, rhubarb might do him good, and could do him no harm. So I left him eight rhubarb pills, and half a lira and some bread, and we promised to intercede with the governor of Ushah to send him to the baths of Broussa, taking his boy on with us for an answer. The Ushah governor was at first rather surly, a most rare occurrence; so I am proportionally dignified, waiting till the firman thawed him, which it did so as to give me hope for the poor Turcoman. He was sitting or squatting in the seat of justice, and twelve prisoners, chained together, were being paraded before him. All brigands, he said; but I suspect villagers arrested in order to compel their villages to give a guarantee against brigandage. There certainly is more of this brigandage than I had supposed. We have an incident almost every day. Coming from Ajinjhol we had to lengthen our route to avoid them. On getting near Bazaschzik, gravestones in the road betokened men killed by them, and the next day I was shown the wayside grave of a 'fuge,' as Antonio called him, but it was ten years since his murder. The prisoner procession I met near Kutaya turned out to be a robber family, who had been caught after murdering a traveller, and I found that the Ghediz governor was right in warning me off the Mischan road, as only ten days ago many hundred Bashi-bazouks had been

out against a band in a village close to it, and after losing three of their own number, had killed three of the robbers, but let seven escape. In fact, the robbers seem to me much the finest fellows going. The chief of the band, like Liftar, the Nicomedian chief, did not murder, but plundered or ransomed the rich to help the poor. Liftar, whose name was in every one's mouth at Broussa and Constantinople, is said to have married scores of girls to poor youths, paying their dower for them. You will say I ought to have kept off this robber-country; but with a clever, resolute man like Antonio I do not believe there is real danger; and, besides, both H—— and Achmet Effendi and the Broussa pasha told us we might safely venture. There was a brigand chief in the Broussa district, by name Manioli, who really was dangerous; but the new pasha had made an active onslaught on his band, and had forced it to disperse, and Manioli himself had escaped a few days ago in a boat across the Sea of Marmora.

"I should not send thee all these robber stories were it not that this letter cannot leave till after my safe arrival at Smyrna, and my journal would not be complete without them; so I may as well make a clean breast of it, and mention an incident on Mount Olympus which might have been serious, but fortunately had no result. The governor had offered us two kavasses for the ascent, but we hardly thought he meant it seriously, and so took

none, as they would have been an intolerable nuisance; and, besides, the consul told us that the small robber band which had infested the mountain had disappeared, and I believe Ball laughed at me in his mind because I would wear my revolver. I told you I went up the mountain by myself (from the point usually reached to the real top, about an hour's walk higher). Near the highest peak, about eight thousand feet high, I saw a man trudging quickly after me. At first I thought he must be Ball; but it turned out to be a native, with his pistol in his belt and a stick, or rather small log of wood, on his shoulder. He talked, or rather shouted, at me, and I shouted in return, as friendly as I could, but keeping my hand on my pistol, which unfortunately was hidden in a case under my coat. I pointed to the peak by way of explanation of my movements, and he seemed to make for a path over the mountain side, but on scaling the summit I found my friend perched on it. I went straight up to him to offer my hand, and almost made him shake hands, which he did unwillingly, and began to talk threateningly, as though he wanted my alpenstock and my pistol, which I think he took for a dagger. Of course I understood nothing except this, that he uttered two or three times the word 'Manioli,' the name of the robber chief. I tried to keep him off, but in a very short time he drew his pistol, but did not present it. I immediately drew mine, and tried to

make him see that it was a revolver. As, however, he showed no peaceful sign, I drew back my trigger to full cock, and heard him click his pistol. I then, thinking the matter serious, fired, not however aiming, my object being to show him I meant fight. My impression is that he then fired and bolted off a few steps. I fired again, and he bolted down the peak about fifty yards, and dodged behind a stone, so that I could only see the muzzle of his pistol. I dodged in like manner behind some stones on the crest of the peak, and after this mutual dodging had lasted a short time he ran off as fast as his legs could carry him, leaving me in possession of his stick, which he had dropped. I took the height of the mountain with my aneroid, and then went back to the tents, walking as fast as in me lay, as, although he had gone off in a contrary direction, I did not feel sure he had not gone for comrades with whom to intercept me. The affair is somewhat unintelligible, and I am more thankful than I can say, not only that he did not hit me, but that I did not hit him. But, upon the whole, my interpretation agrees with the decided opinion of Antonio and other knowing ones, that he was not a professed brigand, or he would have acted more skilfully; but that, attracted by my watch, and thinking my pistol only a small dagger, he had hoped to rob me under fear of his pistol, and when he discovered the power of my pistol he had been greatly frightened.

"Well, enough of robber stories. I hope to be in Smyrna the day after to-morrow, and I have greatly doubted whether to say anything about them. But in spite of our earnest efforts to keep this small adventure to ourselves, it may have got out, and of course, if at all, in an exaggerated form. I of course thought it right to tell the consul, and he said he should tell the pasha; but to my great relief he agreed the next morning not to do so. The result might have been the arrest and punishment of numbers of innocent villagers—a measure quite in keeping with the miserable corrupt government of this country, which is unjust and debased beyond description. To return to my journal: I am now writing at Kula, the cleanest, brightest-looking town I have seen, built on a stream of lava, with a volcanic hill behind it, where we arrived after a short day's journey, giving me some hours' rest, of which I am glad, to get on with my letter, and also to mend up my throat, which is sore and swollen, I suppose parched up by the heat and dust. I am in luxury at the house of a Greek nephew of my host at Ushah, a rich merchant, whose hospitality was really unbounded and most delicate and homelike. His clean white divan, and dark wainscotted room, but with no windows, and the richness of his Turkey carpet (Ushah is the great place for carpets), and the magnificent silk coverlids to my couch, were sights to remember. The dear old man seemed to think it

his duty to keep my candle alight. Waking about two, to my surprise I found it burning, and about an hour afterwards I caught him creeping in to light it again. I wish I had brought presents. I gave my old many-bladed knife to his son, a fine handsome youth, who waited on us at dinner, never sitting down in his father's presence, and I managed to give a looking-glass to the old Turk at Ghediz, emboldened by request in the morning that I would let the harem see my opera-glass. I left the looking-glass for the harem; but I fear the old rascals will keep it to themselves, they seemed so pleased to gaze at their grizzly beards. They were rich landowners, and I rode through their property for miles on Friday. My possible presents are I fear exhausted, which I found provoking enough this morning, for where do you think I slept last night? At the house or rather hut of Selim Bey, prince of some one thousand five hundred or two thousand wandering Turcomans. The Turcomans levy black-mail on the townsmen in old Highland fashion, of which fact I have had convincing proof; but he was proudly but truly hospitable, giving me good bed and board, and riding with me in the morning, armed with his gun and sword and pistol, to see me on my way. This seemed to be the fashion. My host at Ushah escorted me some way out of the town with quite a cavalcade with his son and two servants, all well mounted. In fact his horse was

just the stout cob I should like to possess, and with his long black gown and fur pelisse he was a figure Walter Scott would have loved to describe. The horses here are very good. My little pony, not much bigger than Wixie, pulled with me this morning, having had no day's rest since Broussa, and a long day's journey, not short of ten hours, or close on forty miles yesterday.

"*Salikly, October 21st.*—We started early this morning, and reached here about one o'clock, trotting much of the way, crossing over a high hill down to the valley of Sardis, and leaving Philadelphia to the left. In spring this valley must be lovely; but at present it is a desert, though no heat can deprive the grand rocks and precipices of the long range of Mount Imolus on our left of their austere grandeur and solemn Eastern colouring. We start early to-morrow, and passing through Sardis hope to catch the Cassaba railway to Smyrna about one o'clock. I feel that I am hardly doing my duty in hurrying through Sardis and leaving Philadelphia to my left; but no ruin would tempt me to be longer than I can help from Smyrna and thy letters, and I trust Walter's telegram; and though in good case I might do much in the afternoons, the fact is that for two or three days I have been in great discomfort, not to say pain, with a throat really raw, and with either no voice at all or a voice as hoarse as a frog. I cannot help thinking it is the effect

of the dry dust of these desert fields, and I have little doubt I shall get right when I get to the sea-breezes of Smyrna. Last night I found some ginger in my tea really helpful. By-the-by, we persuaded the khanum, or mistress of the house, last evening to dine with us, a great victory, and she graciously accepted a cup of my tea. She made much of me, as with no voice I seemed ill, and I mourned again over my want of presents; but I think I pleased her as much by making Antonio tell her that she made me so comfortable it was like being at home; and in truth these two Greek houses are the only places in which I have found real comfort. To-night we are in a khan, of which I am glad, as it completes my experience, and I think I shall be tolerably comfortable now that I have had my room washed and swept out, and have spread my indiarubber rug over the cushions; but it is baking hot, and if this be their October, what must be their July?

"*Smyrna, October 24th.*—The P——s and Ball are gone to Ephesus, and I, though loth to miss it, am giving another day's nurse to my throat and chest, which are really much better, so I have time to finish the journal of my ride. My last date was from the Salikly khan. May it be my only khan experience! I thought I had taken effectual precautions; but, alas! in vain; and at twelve I lighted my candle and, giving up sleep, watched my enemies. Antonio I found was in as

bad a plight. So we kept the surragee and the kavass to their time, and were off by four, arriving at the mill at Sardis some time before break of day. This mill and a few scattered Turcoman huts are the only houses in the old Lydian city. We routed up the two young Greeks, tenants of the mill, and went off to the temple of Cybele, a mile or so up the Pactolus, which was not dried up. There are two massive columns left, and many on the ground. I made for an old citadel (Genoese, I suppose), which in the morning twilight seemed nearer than it was, and soon left Antonio hopelessly behind. The citadel was a climb of seven hundred or eight hundred feet, and was worth but little in itself. But the view I got of the whole place, though hurried, was striking. Probably there was no more fit mode of seeing this vast mass of ruin than by the clear morning light dawning on the misty valley of the Hermus, clearing the outline of the hills opposite, sharpening and richly colouring the picturesque route of the Pactolus vale, and disclosing the traces of one vast building after another, with the small shepherds' huts among them.

"We were on our horses again before eight, and pushed on to Cassaba at full swing, not being quite certain of the time of the departure of the train, and so finished our ride at the Cassaba station a little before twelve. It was like waking up from a fairy dream to find myself at a ticket

office among English officials, and to be asked by a smoke-begrimed engine-man, with an honest Yorkshire face, when I had left Yorkshire. But the return to everyday life was in truth a happy one, for I found a note from Ball stating that Walter's telegram, with 'Tout va bien,' had arrived. This was indeed a joyful ending of a ride I shall never forget. When I left Broussa I said I should aim at Tuesday for Smyrna, and so Ball, who with the P——s had been there some days, had come to Manisa (the old Magnesia), a station on the line, the night before, and had sent on a note saying he would return by this train, though he had hardly any expectation of finding me in it. There were two hours and a half before it left; so, after well hugging my good news, and taking affectionate leave of my surragee and dear little pony, backsheeshing the one with two lira, and the other with bread, I wandered into the town of Cassaba, and to much comfort found a Turkish bath. Ball duly met the train at the Manisa station, seeming really well. We got to Smyrna a little before six, steaming by its lovely bay, which struck me at sunset as one of the most beautiful views I had ever seen, and by half-past seven I was at the *table-d'hôte* of the Hotel des deux Augustes, telling my story to the P——s and hearing theirs; but my throat so raw and my voice so hoarse, that I could scarcely speak. I fear my journal-letter will be almost past reading,

but thou must first try to spell it out. My only excuse is that it was mainly written without table or chairs. I know scarcely anything of public matters. While in the interior of course I heard absolutely nothing, and here it is either no news or unbelievable *canards*. Yesterday I found myself close to the principal Greek school, and went over it, and found it a most excellent common school for both boys and girls. With all their faults I expect the future lies with the Greeks. It is still cloudless weather, though not quite so hot, and I am hopeful of a fine passage. Ball, who is now himself quite well, and who has been a capital caretaker of my throat, desires to be kindly remembered."

To his Daughters.

"Hotel des deux Augustes,
"Smyrna, October 25th, 1867.

"My darling Flo and Francie,

"There are two mails from here to England, and so I am going to send a letter to you to race with one to mother. Yours will go up the Adriatic to Trieste, and then over the Alps. Mother's will go across the Mediterranean to Marseilles. Yours goes first, this evening, and we go with it to Syra. My other starts on Monday; but will, I suspect, catch yours up. Now, first tell mother, in case this reaches you first, that I think I have all her dear letters but one, that by Trieste on the 14th,

which I hope will come to-day before we leave. Tell her also that the Marseilles mail will bring her a long letter, the continuation of the journal of my ride across the country of about three hundred and fifty miles on my dear little pony Portakal (Turkish for Orange). He was so little, my feet were hardly a foot off the ground, and very slight also; but well bred, and he did not seem as though he could get tired. I was the only one of our party who did not ride with spurs, or with the sharp Turk stirrups, which are used as spurs, and he was always willing to break into a trot or a canter; and sometimes, after ambling on for miles, our Bashi-bazouk used to flourish his gun and we wave our whips, and away we went at a gallop, baggage-horse and all. The baggage-horse was a good horse, but with a bad character, having a bite or kick ready for every one but me. But I do not blame him, for every one but me was always aggravating him with shouting in his ear or giving him a hit over his hind-quarters. I told you about the Constantinople dogs in my first letter. As I saw more of them, I found them more unpleasant, more mangy and dirty, but they have curious ways of their own. They belong to nobody, but they divide the city into wards, and if a strange dog comes into a ward not his own, all the natives rush out at him from every hole and corner, and amid barks and howls indescribable drive him away. I am sure, if they were well

treated, they would be very nice dogs, something like our shepherd dogs. A Yorkshire engine-driver I found at Cassaba had trained one, and he was as faithful and knowing as any English dog. Did I tell you of the bear I started on Mount Olympus? I roused him pretty close; but only just caught sight of a bit of him, and a little time afterwards saw him running on the edge of the mountain. I could not tell what he was. I never thought of a bear, and he was too clumsy for a deer; but I came upon his footsteps and when I described them I was told he must have been a bear. The shepherds keep large dogs to drive the bears away, noble, lion-looking creatures, but I doubt their courage. The cats are as tame and homelike as the dogs are wild. They are just like our cats. Tell Judy, with my compliments, that I have seen several images of her, and they come up to be stroked and to steal just as Judy would. But the camels! Do either of you remember them or their groaning growl at anything they do not like? I have seen them twisting round long necks, and showing their teeth in very dangerous fashion to their drivers. In the country I have seen thousands of them, and here, in this great Greek city (for it is more Frank and Greek than Turkish), when you are bargaining at a shop in the covered bazaar, you often have to stand aside to let a long train squeeze by. The weather continues dry and cloudless, cold in the night,

fresh in the morning, and hot in the day, and I trust we shall get a fine passage to Athens. We do not get there till Monday, though we go aboard to-night. I am told I must go and pack, so good-bye, my darlings."

To his Wife.

"Austrian Ship *Trebizond*, off Zesmé,
"Saturday noon, October 26th, 1867.

"We are at anchor here, my dearest, taking in fruit at this our last Asian mainland, and I take the opportunity to write a few lines which I hope to send from Syra, to keep company with my letter to the girls from Smyrna. The sea is decidedly rough, and I should have expected to be ill as we came here; but the motion is so slight in this fine, very large, three-masted ship, more than one thousand tons, that I have felt hardly annoyance. There is a cool fresh breeze, and clouds are travelling over the hill tops, but they have moistened the air, and already I feel my throat soothed and softened and quite a different organ to what it was. Lithe, supple Greek boatmen are clustering round the ship, as though they and their boats were one animal, and over against us a few miles off are the villages and hills of Scio, the associations of which make me understand how the Greeks can never submit in patience to the Turks. A very pleasant old gentleman, who has been for thirty years a schoolmaster at Syra, says

he alone is left out of a large family who were massacred, and he pointed out to me a respectable home-like looking man whose wife he said, though a daughter of a good family, had been sold as a slave. There are things not to be forgotten or forgiven, and it is vain to expect the Greeks to be good subjects of the Turks; and with all their faults they have the brain and the push, and the future I think lies with them. Travelling by these Austrian boats is leisurely and pleasant enough to persons like ourselves, in no great hurry. We are at anchor in the day, and steam in the night.

"*Syra, Sunday morning, October 27th*, 1867.—"Alas! my expectations of a good night have been wofully disappointed. About two we crossed from Zesmé over to Scio, and stayed there at anchor till sunset, the storm rising every moment. I had just time to secure my dinner, and then settled down on my back. We did not pitch; but the long screw rolled so desperately that I had to hold on to my berth to prevent being turned out, and everything was set a-going. I was only really sick once, but very miserable, and demoralized, and helpless. This morning I came ashore to the hotel, and have had a cup of tea, which has rather cheered me; but the weather is still blustering, and I fear we shall have another bad night. We leave by the Athens boat, alas! a small one, about six, and we ought to get there about five to-

morrow. This is a striking town, with its clean white houses, climbing up its pyramid of a hill, which I should mount had I enterprise, which in present plight I have not. . . . "

His next stoppage was at Athens, where he was greatly interested in observing the character of the men who were engaged in building up a new kingdom. He attended a meeting of the Chamber of Deputies. "Very amusing it was," he records, "though my friend's comments were certainly not complimentary. 'Do you see that handsome man in the grey dress, red cap and tassel, and embroidered jacket and white kilt-like petticoat? He was a brigand, this minister of war, and is still thought to be the ruling chief of the brigands.' About one-third of the deputies wore the old Greek dress, but all the speakers seemed perfectly fluent, and there was an air of ease and *savoir faire* and self-possession about the assembly which confirmed the conviction that the Greeks will not endure a despotism, even though enlightened, but must be allowed to work out a good government in freedom as best they can. A tall, intelligent gentleman came to us in the gallery and recognized us as having been with him in the steamer. He was L—— P——, lately a minister, whom the brigands took out of his house a short time ago, and because he was a politician let him off with a ransom of sixty thousand drachme, about £2200, which has

however ruined him. I wanted to go to Corinth by land, and asked him if it was safe. I wish you could have seen his expression as he put out his chin and said, 'Possibly.' I have of course given this up. I have no right to give the possible trouble it would cause. But it irritates me far more than in Turkey to find this young rising country thus robber-ridden."

From Athens Mr. Forster made his way home by Corfu and Venice, concluding a delightful tour on November 15th, on which day he reached his home in Yorkshire.

CHAPTER XI.

MINISTER OF EDUCATION.

THE great work of Mr. Forster's life, that with which his name will always be associated, was the Act which gave the people of this country a national system of education. As we approach the time when the member for Bradford had the privilege of proposing the measure which was to rescue his fellow-countrymen from the reproach of ignorance that had so long rested upon them, it may be well to glance backwards as well as forwards, and to deal in one comprehensive section with the whole of his relations towards this great question. It is no easy matter to decide when his interest in the question of a national system of education first showed itself. Soon after he went to Bradford he had expressed himself as profoundly depressed by the terrible ignorance which characterized the great mass of the nation, and in all his speeches and lectures during these early days of his public life, he had insisted upon the right of the English working-man to demand an education for his children—such an education as could

only be obtained through the action of the State. The *laissez faire* doctrine of the orthodox Radicals on the subject of State interference with the laws of supply and demand had always been abhorrent to him. He had insisted in 1848 upon the duty of the nation to provide work for its citizens, and from that date at all events, down to the moment of his triumph in 1870, he never ceased to maintain that the obligation laid upon the State in the matter of national education was imperative and undeniable.

His friend, Canon Jackson, of Leeds, was, of all those who survived him, the man best able to give some account of the growth of opinion in Forster's mind on the subject of education.* For many years the Leeds clergyman was not merely one of Forster's most trusted friends, but was the man whom he most loved to consult on social questions. And there was no question which was discussed between them more frequently than this of education. Their acquaintance had, indeed, commenced in connection with an educational movement. In the year 1849 certain ardent friends of education in Leeds had formed a small council or committee for the purpose of promoting some scheme—as yet wholly undefined and nebulous—of national education. Perhaps it ought

* The name of another intimate personal friend and associate of Mr. Forster's in educational work, that of the Rev. Canon Robinson, must be mentioned with Canon Jackson's.

rather to be said that they had come together for the purpose of discussing among themselves those preliminaries which it was necessary to settle before any common ground of agreement could be arrived at, as to the character of a national educational system. For the Leeds committee—to which certain gentlemen of Bradford were presently added—consisted of men of different shades of opinion. The supporters of a purely voluntary system, the stern puritans who denied the right of the State to interfere in the education of the child, did not associate themselves with the committee, but all other sections of educationists in Leeds and the surrounding district were represented upon it. The leading member was Dr. Hook, the famous vicar of Leeds, and among his colleagues were Canon Jackson, then Dr. Hook's senior curate, Mr. James Garth Marshall, M.P. for Leeds, known to all readers of Mr. Carlyle's "Reminiscences," Mr. Wicksteed, a Unitarian minister, and Mr. Forster. The reputation of Mr. Forster at that time—so far as it had reached the ears of Canon Jackson—was hardly that which might have been expected to recommend him to prominent clergymen like Dr. Hook and his colleagues at Leeds. He was known as a man whose views upon social and political questions were so advanced that in many quarters his name was associated with Chartism and Socialism. This, unquestionably, was a misconception of his posi-

tion in politics, but it was one which at that time was widely prevalent in the West Riding. He was also known, however, for the energy and ability with which he had discharged his duties as chairman of the Bradford Board of Guardians, and for the freshness and originality of mind which he brought to bear upon all the questions he took up.

The Leeds educational council began its career by dealing with the most difficult of all the problems connected with a national system of education—that of religion. At that time the only suggestions for a scheme of religious education were those which gave the Church an immense, indeed an overwhelming, preponderance of authority and influence. It followed, as a natural consequence, that advanced politicians, unable to acquiesce in this vast addition of power to the Church, turned in the direction of a purely secular system, in order to find a solution of the great problem. Mr. Forster was one of those who took this line. He was anxious to get over the religious difficulty by providing for the secular education only of the pupils in the national schools. But by-and-by, as at meeting after meeting of this undistinguished little association—which, though undistinguished, was destined to have no small influence over the final settlement of the education question—the various sides of the religious problem were dealt with, Forster began to waver. It will have been

seen already in the course of this narrative that he was not one of those men who enter upon a discussion or an inquiry with their minds committed to a foregone conclusion. All through his life he was eminently "open to conviction," and as idea after idea connected with the religious aspect of the education question was beaten out his views gradually changed. It is said that he was finally brought round to a conviction that in Bible-reading the true solution of the problem was to be found, by a remark made by Canon Jackson, that "it appeared that the one book in the English language which was to be excluded by Act of Parliament from the schools was the Bible." Be this as it may, from 1849 onwards Mr. Forster never wavered in his belief that the teaching of religion, as set forth in the Bible, must form a part of any national system of education.

In 1849, the country was still, however, a long way from 1870. Many of those who had the strongest feeling in favour of the education of the people were wedded to the belief that the State had no right to interfere between parent and child; and, as a matter of fact, at a Tory meeting which was called at the instigation of the Educational Society in Leeds, the supporters of a national system were completely out-voted by the voluntary party under the leadership of Mr. Baines. All that the society could do at the time was to give its support to Mr. Kay-Shuttle-

worth's scheme, under which grants were made to existing schools, subject to examination by Government inspectors.

Mr. Forster's active interest in education had, however, been fully aroused by his participation in the work of the Leeds Association, and as the discussions of that body had enabled him to realize the practical conditions under which the good work could alone be carried on successfully, he now began, to the utmost of his power, to assist all educational movements in his own district. At Burley he and his partners established an admirable school for the "half-timers" in their works. He secured as master of the school a youth of eighteen, who still holds the position to which he was appointed more than thirty years ago, and who has had the satisfaction of seeing the school, which was founded by the author of the Education Act, attain a remarkable degree of success. Forster's zeal in the educational cause was greatly stimulated by his active interest in this institution for the benefit of his own neighbours and work-people. He delighted to visit it, and to watch the operation of teaching, and he exulted not merely in the progress made by the pupils, but in the success of the master in securing the Government grant. Nor was it only of his own school at Burley that he was a regular visitor. His friend Canon Jackson was in the habit of spending some time every day in the

schools he had established near his church in one of the poorest quarters of Leeds, and again and again on entering the building he would find Mr. Forster there, quietly watching the whole operation of the school, showing special interest in the mode of instruction by pupil teachers, and making himself a thorough master not only of the methods of teaching, but of the system of organization under which the school was carried on. To many it may seem to have been a mere matter of course that Forster should show this deep interest in the schools on his own property and in his friend's parish; for is not the school nowadays one of the first objects of interest which a landowner delights to show to his visitor? But Mr. Forster was no country squire with leisure on his hands, and the amount of time which, during many years, was bestowed by the busy manufacturer upon the practical study of schoolwork bears eloquent testimony to the reality of his interest in education.

It was this practical interest in the question, and not merely his theories on the subject of State education, which led him, in his unavailing attempts to win a seat at Leeds, to come forward as a strenuous advocate of a national school system, and which caused him, in 1864, to take a prominent part in the House of Commons in opposing Mr. Lowe's proposed new Minutes of Council. He was appointed a member of Sir John Pakington's Committee on Education, and

took an active part upon it on the side of those who advocated the establishment of a national system. As a proof of the ignorance which then prevailed, even in high quarters, regarding the existing system, Forster used in subsequent years to relate that one of the questions put by an eminent member of the committee to a witness was, "Pray will you oblige the committee by informing them of what may be the average payment that is made for Sunday school instruction?" Both in 1867 and 1868, whilst the two great political parties were absorbed in the question of Parliamentary Reform, and in trying to forecast the effect which the extension of the franchise would have upon the impending general election, Forster was one of those members who endeavoured to make some progress in the direction of a national system of education. In both years Mr. Bruce, on behalf of the Liberal party, brought in bills relating to education. That which was introduced in 1868 was drafted in consultation with Mr. Forster, and it contained the principle of compulsory provision for educational deficiencies, though compulsion was only to be applied where educational destitution had been proved to exist. This measure received little attention at the hands of members, absorbed as they were in preparations for the approaching general election, and, like the rival scheme of the Duke of Marlborough, it was ultimately withdrawn.

There was another position in which Mr. Forster was enabled not merely to show his interest in educational work, but to render valuable practical aid in the extension of national education. This was his appointment as a member of the Schools Inquiry Commission of 1864. The purpose with which the Commission was appointed was to make an inquiry into the condition of middle-class education in England, the grammar schools and other endowed schools not being of the class of public schools specially subjected to investigation. The work was thoroughly congenial to Forster, and he threw himself into it with his accustomed ardour and with that relish for the actual labour it imposed upon him which none can feel but he whose heart is in his task. "I do not know any man likely to take a sounder view of the best interests of the middle class in this respect," wrote Mr. Bruce (Lord Aberdare) when congratulating him on his appointment. It is unnecessary to enter into any details regarding the work of the Commission. The fruits of their report were duly embodied in a bill which Mr. Forster himself had the privilege of bringing forward in the House of Commons. From the year 1864 to the end of 1867, however, no small portion of his time was devoted to this inquiry into the condition of middle-class education in England, and he thus was not only brought into close contact with the eminent educationists who were his colleagues on the

Commission, but had an opportunity of enlarging enormously his knowledge of the educational wants of the country. That work of self-education which may be said, so far as this special subject was concerned, to have commenced with his membership of the Leeds Educational Association in 1849, was carried to something approaching to completion by his membership of the Royal Commission on Middle Class Schools in 1864–7. Thus, when the time came for the performance of that which was the chief work of his life, Forster was found to be not ill-equipped for his task. Not only were all his sympathies, political, personal, and intellectual, ranged on the side of the great mass of the people, whose exclusion from any real system of education he had deplored for years, but by association with ardent educational reformers of different parties, by practical experience in the work of school-management and school-teaching, and by the part he took in so important an investigation as that of the Schools Inquiry Commission, he had acquired a knowledge of his subject in all its aspects completely beyond that possessed by most public men. He found himself, moreover, distinctly in advance of most persons of his own rank in the political world upon this question of a national system of education. He was conscious that his views were much nearer to those held by the leading educational reformers than were the views of most of his colleagues in Lord

Russell's Administration; and he was not unaware of the fact that the supporters of a scheme of national education, especially those who represented the principles now identified with the name of the Birmingham League, looked to him with confidence as the man who was destined to give legislative effect to their opinions. During the year 1868 it became increasingly clear to Forster himself that one of the dearest and noblest dreams of his life was approaching a realization, and that it was in all likelihood to him that would fall the great honour of founding a national system of education. Any one who understands the workings of an ardent and ambitious nature will know how great was the stimulus to renewed exertions with which this well-founded hope furnished him.

In the month of January, a "national conference" on education was held at Manchester. It was convened for the purpose of carrying forward the work of a previous conference (December 10th, 1866), at which a resolution had been passed in favour of the establishment of "complete provision for the primary instruction of the children of the poorer classes, by means of local rates, under local administration, with legal power, in cases of neglect, to enforce attendance at school." Mr. Bruce's bill of 1867 had been based upon this resolution, though the bill of that year was permissive in its character, and did not provide for the establishment of new schools save where there

was an actual deficiency of school-accommodation. The object of the conference of 1868 was to carry further forward the principles of compulsory school provisions, and Mr. Bruce and Mr. Forster were elected presidents of the meeting. During the course of the proceedings Forster made it clear that for the future he would support no measure that was merely voluntary, either as regards the provision of schools or the attendance of scholars. The prejudice against "compulsory education" as an un-English interference with the liberty of the subject still prevailed very largely. Mr. Forster pointed out, however, that under the Factory Acts there was already compulsion, and he strongly urged that when Parliament was at last asked to pass a National Education Bill, it should be founded upon such an extension of the Factory Acts as would make it certain that no child should be allowed to work full time until his or her education had been really completed. At the same time he opposed those more ardent members of the conference who were all for carrying a complete compulsory system at once, on the ground that national opinion was not yet ripe for so sweeping a change. This was practically the point reached by educational reformers in 1868, viz. compulsory establishment of rate-aided schools where a necessity for them was shown to exist, and compulsory attendance of scholars under some extension of the Factory Acts. The bill brought in during the

session of that year by Mr. Bruce and Mr. Forster for the purpose of carrying these principles into effect was an abortive one; but the Manchester conference placed on record the fact that the educational reformers of England were prepared to support a compulsory measure of national schooling, and that Mr. Forster was one of the men to whom they looked to carry out their views in Parliament.

With the autumn of this year (1868) came the long-expected and much-dreaded general election, when the results of Mr. Disraeli's "leap in the dark" were to be made known. The election was not altogether a pleasant one for Mr. Forster, so far as his personal fortunes were concerned. The Liberals of Bradford selected as his fellow-candidate Mr. Edward Miall, a man of eminent private worth, but who was popularly identified with the advocacy of disestablishment, to which Forster had from his very first appearance in public life refused to commit himself. There were many Liberals in Bradford who regarded Mr. Miall as too extreme in his opinions, especially on Church questions, and they insisted upon bringing forward an independent candidate of more moderate views in the person of Mr. (afterwards Sir Henry) Ripley. The two selected representatives of the Liberal party worked loyally together, and nothing occurred during the contest to weaken in the slightest degree the respect which each had for the other.

But, as usually happens in such cases, their supporters were not able to work quite so harmoniously as they themselves did. The friends of Mr. Miall could not in every case bring themselves to believe that Forster and his friends were really zealous in the cause of their special candidate. No doubt these suspicions were repaid in kind by some of Mr. Forster's more ardent followers. Moreover, there had been great disappointment among many advanced Liberals in the borough at the fact that Mr. Forster, though accepting Mr. Miall as his fellow-candidate, had resolutely refused to commit himself to the disestablishment movement of which Mr. Miall was the leader. They had been immensely elated by the passing of the Household Suffrage Act, believing that all their political aspirations were now on the point of being realized; and they were correspondingly depressed when they found that one in whose Liberal sympathies they had placed such implicit trust, was not prepared to join them in rushing into an attack upon the Established Church.

The contest resolved itself into something like a triangular duel among the Liberals of the borough, and, as was inevitable under such circumstances, it was of a peculiarly bitter and exciting character. The reader need not be troubled with a history of the attempts which were made by the supporters of Mr. Ripley to sow dissension in the ranks of the allied followers of Mr. Forster

and Mr. Miall. At this distance of time these common electioneering stratagems would not be worth mentioning, were it not for the undoubted fact that it was this election of 1868 which marked the beginning of that strained state of the relations between Mr. Forster and a large body of the Liberal party in Bradford which afterwards attracted so much public attention. The election resulted in the return of Mr. Forster at the head of the poll, with Mr. Ripley as his colleague, Mr. Miall polling some four hundred fewer votes than the latter gentleman.

Throughout the country the Liberal party was victorious, and the first Parliament elected under the Household Suffrage Bill resolved itself into a Parliament of ardent Liberals, determined to support Mr. Gladstone in carrying out those long-desired political reforms which it had been impossible to achieve during the reign of Lord Palmerston. Mr. Disraeli, without waiting to meet the new House of Commons, resigned so soon as the result of the appeal to the country was known, and Mr. Gladstone was forthwith entrusted by the Queen with the task of forming an Administration. So far as its personal elements were concerned, it was distinctly in advance of any Ministry which had yet held office in England. Among the members of the Cabinet was found Mr. Bright, the man to whom the country had been so greatly indebted for the triumph of the Reform movement after the

defeat of Lord Russell in 1866; and Mr. Forster himself was appointed Vice-President of the Council—in other words, he became Minister of Education in the reformed Parliament. Some disappointment was felt, and indeed openly expressed, when it was known that he was not to be a member of the new Cabinet; nor is it easy now to understand on what grounds he was excluded from it, seeing that in the programme of work undertaken by the Government there was no more important item than the passing of an Education Act. But the mysteries of Cabinet-making are inscrutable, at all events to the outer world. Mr. Forster himself accepted his appointment with a well-justified delight. The vision which had been only a vision a few months before had now become something real and substantial. He found himself in charge of the Education Department, with the prospect of being called upon in a few months to frame an Education Bill. It added to the pleasure with which he accepted the post that he had as his official chief at the Privy Council his old and dear friend, Lord Ripon, with whom in bygone days in Yorkshire he had spent many an hour in the discussion of the social problems of their time, among which none had occupied a larger share of their attention than this of education. As a consequence of his acceptance of the Vice-Presidency, Mr. Forster was made a member of the Privy Council. He was sworn in on the same day as Mr. Bright, Mr. Layard, and Mr. Childers.

Yet at the moment, when everything thus seemed at its brightest, Forster's public life was suddenly exposed to a terrible peril, and he himself to an ordeal of no ordinary severity. He had, of course, vacated his seat by his acceptance of office. No opposition, however, was offered to his re-election, and he was again duly returned as member for Bradford. But his political opponents in the borough had petitioned against his return in the election of November, and the question of whether he was or was not to be excluded from the new Parliament, in which he had already been appointed to so high and useful an office, was awaiting the decision of an election judge. The petition had been presented against him by the supporters of Mr. Ripley, to avenge the action of Mr. Miall's friends in petitioning against the return of that gentleman. It would not be easy to conceive a more anxious or painful position than that in which Forster was now placed. It was not merely that his whole political future, the gratification of the laudable ambition to do great service to his country which had so long fired his soul, must depend upon the result of the election inquiry—this of itself was a very serious matter; but not less serious in his eyes was the fact that the purity of his relations with the constituents of whose honesty and straightforwardness he was so proud, was being impugned, and that he was accused of having won their favour by means

distinctly corrupt. Throughout his life he had been an uncompromising advocate of purity of election, and had never, when occasion offered itself, failed to denounce those who had been guilty of offending against such purity. And now he was himself accused of having, through his agents, debauched the constituency which had sent him to the House of Commons. It is needless to say that he was conscious of his own integrity. But the contest, as has been said, had been a very bitter one, and on all sides men had strained every nerve to secure the election of the particular candidate whom they favoured. It was impossible for Mr. Forster to feel absolutely confident that no one among his own friends had failed to obey the law in all respects. For a time the anxiety which he had to endure was very acute.

The case against Mr. Ripley was heard first and the accusations brought forward were sustained. Mr. Ripley was unseated. Then came the turn of Mr. Forster, and, as might have been expected, his accusers were not made less vehement or bitter by the fate of their own candidate. It was in January, 1869, that the petition was inquired into before Mr. Baron Martin, the trial taking place at Bradford. The excitement in the town was unbounded. The Liberals of Bradford had hitherto been proud of their reputation as a political body, and they now felt that their good

fame was hanging in the balance. Even more deeply were they moved by their knowledge of the fact that the political fortunes of the representative of whom they were so proud, and in whose personal honour all men believed, were at stake. Mr. Forster, as has already been said, was not a man regarding whom it was possible for any of his acquaintances, public or private, to entertain a neutral feeling. It was his lot either to be deeply loved or strongly disliked by those with whom he was brought in contact; and the Liberals of Bradford—even those who had felt some disappointment because of his attitude on the Church question—at that time loved him as a brother.

When the end of the long inquiry was reached, and it was known that the judge was convinced of the purity and legality of Forster's election, such a scene of enthusiasm followed as has rarely been witnessed, even in the course of a Yorkshire electioneering contest. Writing to a relative directly after the close of the trial, Mrs. Forster said—

"I should have liked to describe to you the scene of excitement and rejoicing in Bradford when the result was known. Before the judge finished his speech, it became known outside the court that William was to keep his seat, and such a *roar* of exulting cheers arose outside as quite drowned the judge's voice. As we drove from

the court-house the immense crowd hemmed in the carriage, clinging to the doors, thrusting in their hands with many a fervent 'God bless you!' and 'Shake hands *once*, Mr. Forster,' and with tears of joy on many a grimy face. You may imagine that William was much moved, and the short address he made them from the balcony of the hotel came from his heart. . . . In the evening, on returning to Burley, William was received by a torchlight procession, and the whole population turned out to welcome him. He and I and the two girls came down from the station in an open wagonette, and I could hardly describe to you the enthusiasm of the people." A writer in the *Spectator*, describing the scene at Bradford, said, "Many men half cried for joy, and the intensity of the excitement when Mr. Forster returned to his hotel was of that kind which bespoke such relations between the people and their representative as probably scarcely holds in any other constituency in England. Bradfordians not only like Mr. Forster's grim honesty and unfailing respect for his fellow-men, but they love it."

Nothing, perhaps, bore stronger testimony to the character of the hopes which had been excited by his appointment as Vice-President of the Council than the congratulations which were showered upon him by all sorts and conditions of men after his triumphant vindication. Mr. Applegarth, of

the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, in congratulating him, wrote, "Had the result been otherwise you would not only have had the sympathy of the working class, but it would have been regarded by them as a misfortune of no small magnitude to the cause of education."

From LORD RUSSELL.

"February 3rd, 1869.

"MY DEAR MR. FORSTER,

"Let me congratulate you on the honourable and satisfactory termination of the inquiry into your election. You will now have time to devote to the great work of education of the labourers and artisans of the country. I entirely agree with Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Bruce that no great measure of education of the working classes can be undertaken this year. But I think you might, with the existing machinery, ascertain generally what the Royal Commission ascertained practically, namely, what is the real state of the education of the country."

From LORD RIPON *to* MRS. FORSTER.

"February 3rd, 1869.

"I cannot resist writing to congratulate you on Forster's triumphant acquittal. I need not, I know, tell you how heartily I rejoice at it on every ground. I never doubted what the result would be, but I must confess that in spite of all

my confidence I have often trembled to think that the folly of a rash supporter might deprive me of his assistance in the great work which we have before us.

"His aid as my colleague in that work is everything to me, and if an evil chance had deprived me of it, I should almost have despaired of accomplishing the task, which I am now very sanguine, if two or three years of ministerial life are given to us, that we shall be able to get through. It is a thing rarely secured in public life, to be able to work hand-in-hand, not only with an old friend, but with a friend in whom one has perfect confidence and thorough sympathy. This is now my good fortune, and the bare possibility that an excitable Bradfordian might have deprived me of it was, therefore, unpleasant indeed."

But the time had not yet arrived for the introduction of the great measure. The session of 1869 was memorable in our national history as that in which the Act for the Disestablishment of the Irish Church was passed. For Forster it had a somewhat different significance. It was the session in which he first successfully piloted a measure through the House of Commons. This was the Endowed Schools Bill, the result of the labours of the Commission on Middle-class Education, of which he had been so long a member. The com-

mission had reported very unfavourably on the state of the education of the middle classes, and had made sweeping recommendations both as to the utilization of the many educational endowments of the country, which had practically been allowed to become obsolete and useless, and as to the reform of middle-class education generally, by the adoption of a system of school inspection. Forster strongly favoured the policy of the commission on both points, and was anxious to see the private schools of the country brought up to a standard commensurate with the importance of the part they played in the national education. But the popular feeling against State interference was too strong, and this part of the scheme had to be dropped. The magnitude of the work involved in the preparation of a measure like the Endowed Schools Bill may be inferred from the fact that it dealt with no fewer than three thousand schools, having a gross income of £592,000. The ministerial proposals were received with considerable favour, Mr. Forster's speech, in moving the second reading, meeting with a very good reception. Many vested interests were, however, affected by the measure, the chief object of which was so to reorganize the grammar schools and other middle-class educational endowments, as to create a link between the primary instruction of the poor and the highest education in the country. It was a hard fight to get the bill through, and many

modifications had to be introduced into it in order to make it acceptable to the majority of the House. Still the measure eventually became law, and Forster had the satisfaction of knowing that his first year's work in the education department was associated with the passing of a bill which has done much to increase the educational resources of the country, and, above all, to improve the education of the middle classes, the deficiencies in whose school system he had himself experienced in his youth.

Education is not the only subject with which the Vice-President of the Council has to deal in his ministerial capacity. For some inscrutable reason he is also the minister who has to look after the health of the cattle of the country; and accordingly, during this year 1869, when his mind was so fully occupied with the great question of the nation's schooling, Forster had to spend no small portion of his time in coping with an outbreak of cattle disease, and in passing a measure designed to stamp out a threatened plague. For the present, however, it is with the education question that I have to deal; and it may be safely said that all through this year it was uppermost in the thoughts of Mr. Forster. Every speech that he made outside the walls of Parliament bore testimony to the fact that his mind was now set steadily upon the accomplishment of the work to which he felt that he had been called. There is

no question of public interest so trite as that of education—none on which so many speeches have been made, or so many dreary platitudes uttered. But the vigour and the freshness of Forster's mind enabled him to invest even this well-worn topic with interest and novelty; and all through 1869, whether in London, at Bradford, at Leeds, or at Liverpool, he devoted himself to the task of preparing public opinion for the introduction of a great and comprehensive scheme of national education.

Although comparatively few years have passed since the Education Bill became law, it is no longer an easy matter to trace its genesis. It has been shown that the Manchester Conference had gone far in the direction of a universal compulsory system of education, and that Mr. Forster was known to have shared in the views of that conference. There was another question, however, besides those of compulsion and universal provision of schooling, which was being earnestly discussed on both sides, and that was the question of religious teaching. To the Nonconformists as a whole any provision by the State for the teaching of creeds and catechisms was abhorrent. To a large section of Nonconformists of advanced views on politics, any teaching of religion whatever by paid public servants seemed wholly wrong and indefensible. To this section of the Liberal Nonconformists it also seemed that the schools established under the

Minutes of Council by the clergy were a violation of those principles of religious equality to which they clung so stoutly, and their hope was that any scheme of national education would either transfer the Church and other denominational schools to the control of the ratepayers, or leave them to be carried on without any assistance whatever from the State. On the other hand, there were many eminent educationists connected with the Church who insisted that the fact that the clergy had led the way in the education of the people at a time when public opinion—and especially the opinion of the Nonconformists—was unfavourable to any system of public State-aided schools, gave the Church a right to special privileges and pre-eminence in connection with any new national system. With such conflicting pretensions as these, stoutly maintained on both sides, it is not surprising that the religious difficulty should have seemed to many sagacious observers to be the rock on which any attempt to found a national system of education was certain to be wrecked.

What line would Mr. Forster take on this religious question? That was the point which excited the greatest amount of interest and curiosity among the two parties during the autumn of 1869. Would he attack the Church schools, and, regardless of the good work they had done in the past, and were still capable of doing, subject them to the fatal competition of public

schools, supported by the nation and controlled by the ratepayers; or would he, by some system of concurrent endowment, give those schools a permanent footing in the soil? Would he leave the ratepayers in each district or parish to decide for themselves what creed or dogma should be taught in their schools, or would he insist that in no school which had to rely mainly for its support upon national aid should any instruction in forms of faith or catechisms be given?

These were the questions which occupied men's minds in the autumn of 1869. They were important enough, in very truth, so far as their bearing upon the educational policy of the Government was concerned, and they were hardly less important as regarded their personal bearing upon the future of Mr. Forster himself. It might have been thought that there could be little doubt, at all events, upon some points. No one who knew Forster's reverence for all that was good and noble in the past, and the strong sense of justice which lay at the very root of his nature, could imagine that he would ever consent to destroy those Church schools which had kept the torch of education burning when almost everywhere else darkness prevailed. He himself, in a speech at St. James's Hall, in the early part of 1869, expressly declared his resolve "not to destroy anything in the existing system which was good, if they could avoid it." He did not wish, he

declared in the same speech, "to strike a blow against what these men"—the clergy and other friends of education—"were doing; he wanted to establish a system that would embrace the whole of the country, and leave no children without a chance of education, whilst at the same time making the best of the existing machinery."

But though those who knew him well must have known that he meant every word which he thus uttered, and that there was no possibility of his being induced to lead a destructive movement against the denominational schools, there were many who, remembering only the reputation of his early days, when he was the ardent young politician of Bradford, over whose advanced views upon all social and political questions the Whigs of the borough shook their heads uneasily, felt convinced that he was resolved now to give England a theoretically perfect system of national education, even though the establishment of such a system would involve the sweeping away of the existing schools. Those Radicals who believed—as many Radicals did believe in 1869 and 1870—that the passing of the Household Suffrage Act had removed every barrier to the realization of that programme of advanced legislation in which the Disestablishment of the Church holds a prominent place, could not be convinced that Mr. Forster would allow such an opportunity as that afforded by the framing of an Education Bill for

striking a great blow on behalf of religious equality, to pass unimproved.

It is, unfortunately, necessary to dwell at this length on the state of public feeling in those days, because of subsequent events and their influence on Mr. Forster's career. It must be clearly understood, however, that the function of the biographer is to record, and not to apologize or to criticize. As a matter of fact, Mr. Forster, with that strong practical turn which was so thoroughly characteristic of him, was at this time thinking chiefly, not of the bearing of any measure which he might propose upon the state of parties, or upon particular questions in politics or sociology, but of the way in which he was to get the children of England into school. Least of all, it may be said with confidence, was he thinking at that time of his personal interests or of his political future.

In his diary for October 10th, 1869, there occurs the first mention of the Education Bill. At that time the bill must have taken distinct shape in his own mind, for a few days afterwards (October 21st) he submitted to the Cabinet a printed draft entitled, "Memorandum by Mr. Forster of suggestions for consideration in framing the Education Bill for England."

In this document he said, "We are called upon to consider the conditions of our educational vote, and to change our educational system, not because we pay too much money, nor yet because

the money is thought to be badly spent, but because the nation does not get what it wants—a complete national system. Our aim, then, must be—(1) To cover the country with good schools; (2) to get the parents to send their children to school."

In attaining these objects, it was necessary, Forster pointed out, that there should be the least possible encouragement to parents to neglect their duties, the least possible expenditure of the public money, and the least possible injury to existing efficient schools.

"Our object, then, being to supplement the present voluntary system—that is, to fill up its gaps at least cost of public money, with least loss of voluntary co-operation, and with most aid from the parents—let us consider the four different plans before us:—

"1. The plan just propounded at Birmingham, which provides that local authorities shall establish free schools when want of schools is proved, such schools to teach no religious dogma; to be built and maintained by rates and taxes, the rates paying one-third of the cost, the taxes the remainder; to be managed by the ratepayers, but to be inspected and kept up to a certain standard by the central government.

"2. The bill brought forward by Mr. Bruce in 1868, which was the first proposal to make compulsory provision for English schools, and which,

while allowing districts to rate themselves for existing schools and for the erection of new schools, enabled the Government to compel them to levy such a rate upon educational destitution being proved.

"3. The plan sketched out by Mr. Lowe, which proposed that the Government should make a survey of the educational provision and need in each parish, should inform the public of such need, and, after giving time for its supply of voluntary effort, should compel the district to provide such supply, upon proof of the continued existence of the need; and, lastly,

"4. The plan proposed by the National Education Union, of inducing and tempting the volunteers to cover the whole country, by so increasing the aid given by Government to such volunteers as to make any compulsory provisions unnecessary."

Proceeding to discuss these four schemes, Mr. Forster expressed his fear that the proposal of the National Union must be dismissed as insufficient. "Again, the complete logical machinery of the Birmingham League would quickly undermine the existing schools, would relieve the parents of all payment, would entail upon the country an enormous expense and—a far more dangerous loss than that of money—would drive out of the field most of those who care for education, and oblige the Government to make use solely of official or

municipal agency." Mr. Bruce's bill he had earnestly supported at the time when it was brought forward, but he now feared that it would need much modification; it would be impossible, for example, to compel the ratepayers to provide rate aid for denominational schools. "I, therefore, now look with most hope to the plan sketched out by Mr. Lowe, the ruling idea of which I understand to be compulsory school provision, if and where necessary, but not otherwise. But it seems to me impossible to carry out this plan, unless we first, and without delay, divide the country into educational districts, and make every district responsible to the central government for the elementary education of its inhabitants. I cannot but think that all hope of success depends on this formation and responsibility of local districts, without which it is hard to see how a national system is possible. The central government cannot itself undertake to find schools and schoolmasters for the kingdom; and it is acknowledged that it cannot rely solely on the action of volunteers. Having formed the districts, officials in each district should be ordered to furnish returns showing the number of schools, of scholars, and of children at school and not at school; while the Government by its officers and inspectors would test and systematize these returns, and ascertain the efficiency of the schools. We should then have the facts and persons with whom to deal.

The Government would know the amount of educational destitution in any district, and upon whom could be imposed the responsibility of its removal; and, when educational destitution could be proved, where it could be shown that there are either not enough schools or not enough good schools, notice could be given that if, within a certain time, the bad schools be not improved, or the new schools not erected, the district must raise the sum needed to supply the deficiency. Opportunity would thus be given to those who prefer the present management to keep it, and to those who dislike rates to do without them, but their preference and dislike would not be allowed to keep a district in destitution."

After discussing the manner in which the school districts should be formed, the incidence of the rates, and the desirableness of maintaining the payment of a certain proportion of the cost of the education of the child by the parent, where the latter is possessed of means, the memorandum proceeded:

"What power should we give the ratepayers? All the powers possessed by other managers, with this exception, no permission to teach special forms of Christianity. It would not be fair to tax a Roman Catholic to teach Methodism.

"Again, should the ratepayers assist existing schools? I would not *compel* them to do so; but I would permit them, if they pleased, to pay for

secular education in denominational schools, in like manner as does the State. It is not unfair to levy a rate on a Roman Catholic for the secular education of a Methodist. But if the ratepayers give aid to denominational schools, they should do so impartially; if to any, then to all efficient schools, whether denominational or secular.

"The religious difficulty, so much feared in education bills, I cannot but think, will not be hard to overcome, if we remember, first, that we are and mean to remain a Christian people; and next, that we have made up our minds that the Government shall not in future legislation attempt to teach any special form of Christian faith. Carrying out these principles, we should refuse to establish, though we should not refuse to aid, either secular or denominational schools; but we should include the Bible and the acknowledgment of Christianity in any schools for which the Government, either by rates or taxes, is directly and solely responsible; and we should also, by ceasing to pay for dogmatic teaching by one denomination alone, that of the Church of England, be enabled to discontinue the present costly and inconvenient denominational inspection."

Mr. Forster next discussed the question of how to secure the attendance of the children. It will be remembered that in his speech at the Manchester Conference in the previous year, he had advocated an extension of the Factory Acts, as a

means of indirect compulsion; but, after mentioning this and other plans of the same conclusion, he informed the Cabinet that he did not think measures of partial and indirect compulsion would be difficult; "it would be much easier and more efficient if the law frankly declared it to be the duty of every parent who did not teach his child at home to send him to school, if a good school were within his reach." The duty of securing the attendance of the children at school he would, however, impose upon the local authorities rather than upon the State. "Officials should be appointed by the ratepayers, whose duty it should be to warn a parent in case he neglected to send his child to school, and, in case of continued neglect, to bring him before the magistrates, who should be empowered to levy on him a small fine. The magistrates should also have power to order, at their discretion, the school-fee to be paid out of the rates, and also to require the guardians to compensate the parent for the earnings of the child, if convinced that he absolutely needed them." Finally, Mr. Forster said, "In venturing to submit the above suggestions, I may be allowed to add my conviction that in dealing with this education question boldness is the only safe policy; that any measure which does not profess to be complete will be a certain failure; but that we shall have support from all sides, if, on the one hand, we acknowledge and make use of present

educational efforts, and, on the other hand, admit the duty of the central government to supplement these efforts by means of local agency."

Such was the first memorandum submitted to the Cabinet by Mr. Forster, on the subject of a national scheme of education. My readers will see how complete it was, and how on all its more important points it set forth the principles which were afterwards embodied in the Education Bill. No apology is needed for the length at which I have made extracts from this important document. As, however, some persons have been found who deny to Mr. Forster the merit of the authorship of our English system of education, I invite the careful attention of my readers to the terms of this memorandum, a perusal of which proves how completely the Education Act of 1870 was Mr. Forster's Act. His is the responsibility, and his the glory of having framed and carried a measure which has already changed English society for the good, and which will continue to bring forth fruit long after the statesmen of the present age have been forgotten.

CHAPTER XII.

THE EDUCATION BILL.

It was one thing, of course, to devise a scheme of national education, and quite another thing to secure its acceptance by the Cabinet, by Parliament, and by the country. Mr. Forster soon found that his difficulties had really only begun when he had drawn up the remarkable memorandum in which he set forth his ideas as to the manner in which the great problem was to be solved. Already some of his utterances had alarmed the Birmingham League and the men who were anxious to give the country a system the logical completeness of which was to be secured at the cost of the existing schools and the sacrifice of their founders. "I hope you are not contemplating a measure which will strengthen denominationalism," wrote a friend of his, who was a prominent member of the league; and he added, in words which certainly implied something like a threat, "we have unmistakable proofs that the people are on our side." For the moment, however, Forster was thinking of the Cabinet rather

than of Birmingham, and above all of that member of the Cabinet who was its inspiring and controlling spirit—Mr. Gladstone.

On November 5th, he and Lord Ripon (then Lord de Grey) had an interview by appointment with Mr. Gladstone, and he speaks of it in his diary as having been "very satisfactory." A few days later Lord Ripon sent him a hasty note from Downing Street, in the following terms:—

November 24th, 1869.

"The Cabinet has agreed to the preparation of an Education Bill on the basis of your memo., so I have appointed Jenkins to meet you at 1, Carlton Gardens, at 9.30 on Friday."

So far everything seemed to be going smoothly. The work of drafting the bill was set about in good earnest. But it had not proceeded far before clouds appeared on the horizon. Rumour had naturally been busy with the nature of the measure, which it was known that ministers had in contemplation; and some of the statements concerning it were not altogether wide of the mark. At all events, the members of the Birmingham League conceived a well-founded suspicion that their favourite plan for a universal scheme of secular schools under local control was not that which had been adopted by ministers. Forthwith people began to whisper that the time was not yet ripe for the passing of an Education Bill, and that

it would be much better to wait a year or two for the fuller formation of public opinion than to bring forward a scheme now which would not satisfy the advanced section of the Liberal party. It is noteworthy that at that time it was fully believed by many Liberals of intelligence that the election of 1868 had merely given us the foretastes of the reign of democracy, and that with each succeeding Parliament the strength of the popular party would be increased. Subsequent events have hardly confirmed this theory. Rumours, the natural results of the efforts which were being made to procure a postponement of the Bill, began to circulate to the effect that, after all, education was not to form part of the work of the session of 1870. Stories were at the same time told of dissensions in the Cabinet. Forster—who, it will be remembered, was not himself at this time in the Cabinet—became anxious lest, after all, the golden opportunity was about to be let slip.

To MR. GLYN.

"Burley-in-Wharfedale, Leeds,
"December 6th, 1869.

"DEAR GLYN,

"Will you let me say a word to you on education matters? Many persons have been expressing alarm to me in consequence of the recent newspaper gossip about educational differences in the Cabinet—probable postponement of

bill, etc., etc. Of course I have pooh-poohed such gossip as foolish *canards*, but I have been met with the statement that the rumours came from persons connected with the Government. I do not believe this, but the *Observer* has so much the reputation of being inspired that I think the article yesterday will increase this impression. Do you think you can do anything, if not to counteract this, at any rate to prevent its continuance? There was one specially ridiculous *canard* that Lowe urges delay, whereas he, as well as Bruce, have with me the strongest possible opinion that we ought to make up our minds to prepare a bill and carry it. We can carry a good strong Education Bill this year, whereas if we postpone, the Government will lose the initiative, and have to wait years till the great battle of denominationalism be fought out, or else bring forward their own bill at great disadvantage. Of course, everything must give way to Irish land; but as regards Irish matters, I believe postponement of education would be equally bad policy, because by putting off an urgent English measure on Irish grounds we should enrage English members, and excite the suspicions of the Irish Catholics. We shall gain nothing, but lose much, by departing from the true ground, that the conditions of the education problem are different in Ireland and in England. However, I need not bore you with arguments against postponement

which, if needed, I could and would give fully. My sole object is to beg you, if you have a chance, not to let De Grey's and my difficulties be increased by talk, supposed to be inspired, against the views which I understand to be those of the Cabinet."

"MR. GLYN *to* MR. FORSTER.

[*Confidential.*]

"December 7th, 1869.

"MY DEAR FORSTER,

"I alluded to the subject of your note when talking to Mr. G. to-day. He has confidence in your plan; does not despair of time, but will postpone anything and everything to the land. It will be very wrong and unwise, I think, in any one connected with the Government or any paper we can influence, either to throw cold water upon education *this* year, or to give any specific engagement where *time* must be an important element. Whether you are right that you could do more this year than by waiting for a more decided concentration of opinion than you now have, wiser heads than mine will decide. My care will be to prevent, if I ever can, gossip or any prejudgment by the press. The *Observer* has no inspiration now, and is doing no good. . . . There is, I well know, no truth at all in the absurd ideas of any Cabinet differences upon the question. The Education Bill must have a high place in the ses-

sional programme. Whether time will suffice is another thing. All will, I think, agree—at least, I hope so—that *two big questions* can't go on at the *same time* in the House, and that land is No. 1! I have heard little *of late* in the way of talk by outsiders upon the question of putting off the education question, and till I got your note I was happy to believe that there seemed a disposition to trust the Government as to 'when and how.'"

This letter was not wholly conclusive as to the eventual decision of ministers on what Forster conceived to be the momentous question of the production or postponement of the measure, and he continued to feel anxiety on the subject. Nor was his anxiety allayed by the fact, which soon leaked out, that certain portions of the bill met with considerable discussion in the Cabinet, which was then meeting regularly to consider the programme of the session. Mr. Gladstone was practically absorbed in the preparation of his great measure on the tenure of land in Ireland, by means of which he hoped to effect so much, and but for the steadiness and perseverance of Lord Ripon, who now, as at all times, worked with affectionate cordiality with his colleague in the Privy Council office, it is quite possible that the measure might have been put off to a more convenient season. This, however, was not the case.

"LORD RIPON *to* MR. FORSTER.

"February 4th, 1870.

"MY DEAR FORSTER,

"The bill is through—compulsion and all; to be brought in as at present advised on Thursday the 17th. This is first-rate.

"Yours ever,

"DE GREY."

On February 8th, the first night of the session, Forster gave notice of his Education Bill amid the cheers of the House. The date fixed for the first reading was that named in the Cabinet, Thursday, February 17th. His diary for that day contains the following entry:—"Went over notes of speech with Jane. Lunch-dinner—just went to office—took to House Cumin, Sandford, and Hutton, J. Cropper also with us. Began my education speech about 5.45. Spoke for about one hour and forty minutes—both speech and bill very well received—dragging debate till about ten—only opponents, Lord R. Montague and Whalley. Pakington very strong in favour."

This matter-of-fact description hardly conveys an idea of the reception accorded to the remarkable speech in which Mr. Forster brought forward his great measure. The speech was a brilliant triumph in the Parliamentary sense, and it was made all the more brilliant by the force of contrast. A few days before a crowded House had sat

entranced whilst Mr. Gladstone had given that wonderful account of the provisions of his Irish Land Bill, which is regarded by many competent critics as the most remarkable of all his oratorical achievements. It was no easy matter to follow Mr. Gladstone at so short an interval and before the same audience. Mr. Forster, however, was equal to his task. Making no attempt at oratorical effect, he contented himself by giving to the House the clearest and simplest exposition in his power of the provisions of his bill. Such colour as his speech had was derived, not from the resources of the rhetorician, but from the speaker's depth of feeling, from the earnestness, the manifest emotion with which he spoke upon a question that had for years been so near to his heart. If there was no trace of vanity in manner or words, there must have been within him a strong sense of grateful pride, that to him at last it should have fallen to be the instrument under Providence of converting into a reality that which had for years been the dearest dream of so many noble spirits. His work on earth was not yet done. Much of toil, of endeavour, and of achievement still lay before him; yet Forster's friends may well feel, and feel with deep gratitude and contentment, that upon the day on which he stood up in the House of Commons to explain the scheme, born of his fertile brain and matured by his patient care and industry, for bringing to every child of English birth the

blessings of education, he reached the highest point in his career as patriot and statesman. No greater duty was ever laid upon any public man of our century, nor could higher honour be coveted by any.

The measure as explained to the House by Mr. Forster differed upon some not unimportant points from his original scheme, though in the main the outlines of that scheme had been faithfully followed. In his memorandum he had proposed that compulsion should be applied absolutely. In the bill it was left to the local authorities in each district to determine whether attendance at school was or was not to be compulsory. Again, in the memorandum it was made more clear than it was in the bill itself that any aid which might be given by the local authorities to schools already existing was to be confined exclusively to secular education. Upon the whole, however, Mr. Forster's scheme had been accepted by the Cabinet. The country, as he had proposed, was to be divided into districts, and the educational deficiencies in each district were to be ascertained. An opportunity was then to be given to voluntary workers in the cause of education to supply those deficiencies, and where they failed the State was to step in and, acting through the local authorities, was to see that sufficient school-accommodation was provided. This was the outline of the plan proposed by Mr. Forster. It was not by any

means logically or theoretically perfect. It was not designed to please any one class or party in the community; but it was, at all events, likely, if honestly carried out, to secure for the children of the country free access to good schools, and that was the one end at which its author aimed.

On its first production the bill was favourably viewed. Mr. Fawcett, it is true, uttered a protest against its failure to make compulsory attendance absolute and universal; but this was the only discordant note that was sounded, and even Mr. Dixon, the representative of the Birmingham League, expressed himself as satisfied with the measure and anxious for its success. On the following morning the press hailed the scheme with a chorus of approbation, and everybody seemed disposed to congratulate its author upon the manner in which he had solved a great problem.

Mr. Forster himself knew better than to expect that this pleasant state of things would last, though it must be said of him that he was hardly more prepared than other persons for the passionate opposition which was so soon to be evoked by his proposals among those politicians with whom he had once been in the closest accord. There is no need now to rewrite the history of the education controversy of 1870 and the three following years. Forster's vindication is to be found in the results of the great measure which he succeeded in

carrying, in face of every obstacle, through the House of Commons. Even if, in procuring the passing of that bill, he had sacrificed his whole political future, and alienated all his friends, he would still have had his own exceeding rich reward in the consciousness that he had given our English children the schools which had so long been withheld from them. From the first he knew that by refusing to adopt the "logical system" of the Birmingham League, he had exposed himself to the bitter hostility of every *doctrinaire* Radical. He knew, too, that by refusing to employ education as a stalking-horse, by means of which to attack the Established Church, he had inflicted a grievous disappointment upon those Nonconformists who, anxious as they were to advance the cause of education, were still more anxious to secure the establishment of absolute religious equality throughout the land. But he felt that he had ample justification for the course which he had taken, in the fact that if he had been either logically or politically orthodox, he must have postponed the passing of an Education Act indefinitely. The leaders of the Birmingham party themselves admitted that such postponement would be necessary if any sweeping measure, such as that which they contemplated, were to be brought in by the Government. They believed, however, that this postponement would only be for a single year, or for two years at most, and

they regarded it as a crying evil that what they described as "a premature attempt to legislate" should be made before public opinion was ripe enough to support their own advanced schemes. Forster himself held a different opinion. He had studied practical politics long enough to know that it is as easy and safe to predict the state of the weather as the state of the political atmosphere at any particular moment. He knew better than to suppose that, if an opportunity were allowed to pass unimproved in 1870, it could with certainty be reckoned on to present itself again in 1871. Speaking to his old Bradford friend, Sir Jacob Behrens, who had objected to the absence of general compulsion, and the inclusion of the religious question in the bill, he said, "If these two questions are to be fought out to the bitter end, I feel sure that generations of Englishmen will have to go to their graves without education; but, having the chance of carrying a bill, I consider it my duty to do so."

Was he right in this belief, to which he clung strongly to the end of his days? Was it a wise act on his part to take the opportunity of passing *a* bill, instead of waiting until the moment came when *the* bill of the Birmingham League could have been carried, not merely through the House of Commons, but through the House of Lords? Above all, was he a traitor not merely to his political party, but to his own political convictions,

when he brought forward a measure which, though admirably designed to attain its own special object, was undoubtedly not calculated to promote the policy of the Radical party with regard to religious questions? It is well that I should set these questions plainly before my readers, for they are questions which were asked again and again during Mr. Forster's lifetime, and which were answered, as a rule, in accordance with the personal prejudices or prepossessions of the individual to whom they were addressed. From the moment when he laid that measure, which is the *magnum opus* of his life, upon the table of the House of Commons, down to the day of his death, Mr. Forster, more than any other politician of his time, was the subject of a controversy which dealt not merely with his methods and results, but with his motives. Fierce and innumerable were the attacks which were made upon him by some, and generous and warm was the defence which was offered on his behalf by others. But too often the attacks came from those who had once been his friends and fellow-workers, whilst many a time it was by some stranger or political opponent that his action was vindicated. No one can doubt that this fact did much to prejudice Mr. Forster in the eyes of his contemporaries. No one, indeed, would have been more ready to admit that it must be so than himself; for with all the strength of his warm and tender heart he yearned for the sympathy and

approval of those with whom he had been in lifelong sympathy, whilst not even the stirring atmosphere of the House of Commons in times of fierce political contest, could make the applause of his opponents altogether grateful to his ears.

I ask my readers, then, to consider, with that patience and impartiality which befit those who pass judgment on the dead, whether Forster really erred in the course which he took on this question of education. One accusation against him I may indeed put aside with disdain. It was said by some, whose whole souls must have been embittered by the gall and wormwood of religious and political intolerance, that he had "forced forward" the Education Bill to gratify his own personal ambition. Those who have read the previous chapters of this book know that Forster was ambitious; but they must also know how little of self-love and self-seeking entered into his political conduct. The man who ran the risk of commercial ruin in 1848 rather than abandon the political opinions which he shared with the Chartists, and who at Leeds sacrificed the hope of obtaining a much-coveted seat in Parliament rather than modify his views on this very question of education, will, I think, be acquitted by every one of having allowed mere self-interest to control his course of action as a minister. It is obvious, indeed, that if Forster were guilty of "forcing" education upon the country merely to serve his

own ends, the members of the Cabinet of 1870 must have been his accomplices. He was an outsider. He had to be content with laying his views on the subject before them in a printed memorandum, of which I have furnished my readers with an abstract. No one in his senses can imagine that, in accepting his proposals and in authorizing him to prepare a bill on the lines he had indicated, Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues were merely yielding to the consuming ambition of a subordinate.

But, upon the question of time, what verdict will now be given by the country? Does any one now really believe that if the golden days of 1870 had been allowed to pass unimproved, a better bill than Mr. Forster's could have been carried in 1871 or 1872? Governments, like individual men, no sooner begin to live than they begin to die. In 1870 Mr. Gladstone's Ministry was at the very zenith of its power and popularity, and that which it could not accomplish that year it most assuredly could not have accomplished in any subsequent year of its existence, even if the inexorable and ever-growing pressure of public affairs had again furnished a chance for the introduction of an Education Bill. I need not pursue this question further, for each of my readers can determine for himself whether since 1874 there has been any real opportunity for inducing the two Houses of Parliament to embody the Birmingham plan of

education in a legislative measure. All that need be contended for on behalf of Mr. Forster, is that he was right when he maintained that the choice lay between the passing of the best possible bill in 1870, and the indefinite postponement of any attempt to introduce a national system of education. He himself felt far too deeply on the question to be able even to contemplate the notion of postponement. It was no abstract love of education, no predilection for any particular theory on the subject, that led him to seize with joy the first opportunity of setting up schools into which should be gathered the great army of untaught children. In this, as in other matters, it was the practical and the personal aspect of the question which attracted him most strongly. He saw at Bradford, at Leeds, and in London, hosts of little children whom he knew to be growing up in a real and terrible heathendom. He would sometimes stop these children in the street, question them closely as to how they lived, what they knew, and to what they were looking in future life; and he would turn away from them with wet eyes, and a heart that was wrung with pity for a lot so hopeless. "Let each of us," he said, in the peroration of his speech when introducing his bill, "think of our own homes, of the villages in which we have to live, of the towns in which it is our lot to be busy; and do we not know child after child—boys or girls—growing up to probable

crime, to still more probable misery, because badly taught or utterly untaught? Dare we, then, take on ourselves the responsibility of allowing this ignorance and this weakness to continue one year longer than we can help?" He was thinking of the children whom he actually knew, whom he had seen, and with whom he had conversed, when he drew up his bill; and its first, its only object, was to get these children, and others like them, into school; not to strike a blow at a particular Church, or to strengthen the cause of a political party, even though that party was his own.

But the storm which raged round the bill whilst it was passing through the House of Commons was extraordinarily severe. When the members of the Birmingham League, and the other advocates of a State-controlled compulsory system, saw that under the new measure the denominational schools, instead of being swept away or left to wither under an irresistible competition, were to be maintained and afforded a chance of competing on fair terms with the new board schools, they were roused to a manifestation of opposition and anger such as has seldom been directed against any Ministry by its own political friends. On March 9th, after some days of agitation in the country, an "enormous noisy deputation," representing the League party, waited on Mr. Forster. Five days later the bill came on for second reading in the House of Commons, and it was met by

a hostile amendment on the part of Mr. Dixon, which declared that no measure of education would afford a satisfactory or permanent settlement which left the question of religious instruction in rate-supported schools to be determined by local authorities. It was the religious question upon which the opponents of the bill had determined to take their stand. They feared that all manner of evil must result from the proposal to allow the local authorities any kind of discretion as to the manner in which religious truths were to be conveyed to the children. Forster protested strongly against any attempt to prevent religious teaching in the schools.

"Our opinions in religion," he said, replying to Mr. Dixon, "may be different; but I think we all of us agree, the enormous majority of the country agrees, that the standard of right and wrong is based on religion, and that when you go against religion you strike a blow against morality; and if we could solemnly by Act of Parliament tell the parents of children to be educated that religion is a subject not to be mentioned in the schools, they would suppose that we cared little about religion ourselves, and that in our opinion it were best left alone. We are told that some active and intelligent artisans, men to whom we look forward with hope that they will take part in the political government of the country—we are told that they have great doubts on the subject,

and that they dislike any religion being pushed on them in this way. I believe that to some extent that is the case, and there is something in their past history to explain it; but if the House wishes to perpetuate that feeling, the way to do it is to decree that religion shall be tabooed. I speak not merely having regard to the present, but as having hope for the future. Surely the time will come when we shall find out how we can agree better on these matters—when men will find out that on the main questions of religion they agree, and that they can teach them in common to their children. Shall we cut from the future all off hope of such an agreement, and say that all those questions which regulate our conduct in life and animate our hopes for the future after death, which form for us the standard of right and wrong, —shall we say that all these are to be wholly excluded from our schools? I confess I have still in my veins the blood of my Puritan forefathers, and I wonder to hear descendants of the Puritans now talk of religion as if it were the property of any class or condition of men. . . . I would say that it belongs to all religious men to teach religion, and the master of the school, we trust, will be a religious man. To no religious man can we say leave religion alone. My honourable friend the member for Birmingham talked of the failings of the working-men. I have some experience of the working-men. I know their sympathies; I

know their doubts and difficulties; I wish I knew how to answer them; but I am sure of this—the old English Bible is still a sacred thing in their hearts. The English people cling to the Bible, and no measure will be more unpopular than that which declares by Act of Parliament that the Bible shall be excluded from the school."

For three nights the discussion was maintained with vigour, the fears expressed by many of the Nonconformists, as well as by not a few of the Conservatives, as to the effect of allowing religious teaching to be given at the discretion of the local authorities by the teachers, being of the strongest kind. Eventually, however, on March 18th, on a promise from Mr. Gladstone that the clause relating to religious instruction should be reconsidered and amended, the amendment of Mr. Dixon was withdrawn and the bill read a second time.

"*To the* Rev. Canon Kingsley.

[*Private.*]

"House of Commons, April 1, 1870.

"My dear Kingsley,

"Thank you for your note. Knowing you were not at the League deputation, I was rather surprised to see your name quoted as present. I still fully believe that I shall get my bill through this year, but I wish parsons, Church and *other*, would all remember as much as you do that

children are growing into savages while they are trying to prevent one another from helping them.

"Yours ever faithfully,

"W. E. FORSTER."

It was before the introduction of the bill, and at a time when rumour was busy as to its character, that the illustrious Lord Shaftesbury, alarmed by some reports that he had heard, went on behalf of the Ragged School Union to ask Mr. Forster if it was true that Bible-teaching was to be excluded from the new schools. Going directly after his interview with Mr. Forster to a meeting of the committee of the Union, Lord Shaftesbury reported the answer he had received as follows:—"Lord Shaftesbury,—I would rather have my right hand cut off than be the means of excluding the Bible from our day schools."

It would be wholly unprofitable and wearisome to discuss all the phases through which the controversy on the bill passed before it finally became law. All the less necessary is it to inflict pages of *Hansard* upon the reader, inasmuch as the experience of seventeen years has proved that most of the fears which were expressed regarding the operation of the bill on the one side by the representatives of the voluntary schools, and on the other by the members of the League, were wholly illusory. But whilst the House of Commons was engaged either in resisting the insidious

attempts of the Church party to procure exceptional advantages for themselves—as, for example, when they proposed to relieve a man of any liability to a school-board rate provided he subscribed an equivalent amount to a voluntary school—or in hair-splitting as to what was and what was not denominational or dogmatic religious teaching, Forster, steadily pursuing the one great object he had in view, the passing of an efficient Education Bill, had many anxieties to encounter. The feeling among the friends of the League grew higher out of doors. They rallied for an attack upon the bill, and they sought to strengthen that attack by making a personal appeal to Mr. Gladstone, founded upon the well-known fidelity of the Nonconformists to those principles of which Mr. Gladstone was now the foremost representative.

It is somewhat difficult to see how, in such a matter as this, men could distinguish between the Prime Minister and one of his colleagues, who did not even hold a seat in the Cabinet. It affords testimony, however, to the great place which Mr. Forster now held in the eyes of his fellow-countrymen, that it was upon him—a junior official—rather than upon the responsible head of the Government, that his opponents sought to fasten the whole responsibility for the measure. Of course, Mr. Forster was responsible for it. He was responsible for its inception. It was he who had written the memorandum setting forth the outlines

of the schemes; it was he who had drafted the bill in conjunction with Mr. Jenkins. But when it is remembered that the bill, when thus drafted, was discussed clause by clause in that Cabinet of which Mr. Forster was not a member, and that alterations were made in it—some affecting this very religious question—without his consent, sometimes without his knowledge, it is difficult to understand upon what ground the Birmingham party sought to exonerate the rest of the Ministry from all responsibility for the measure, and to treat Mr. Forster as a scapegoat. Mr. Gladstone, as it happened, was at this time so deeply absorbed in the Irish Land Bill that he could not enter into any full consideration of the questions at issue between the Nonconformists and the Ministry. Nevertheless, every member of the Government felt the importance of these issues, and by way of allowing time for a clearing of the air, the bill, having been read a second time, was hung up for a period of no less than three months. During that interval Forster sought, as far as he could, to meet the views of his old friends. There were only two points upon which he seemed determined not to give way, but they were the very points at issue. He would not throw over the voluntary schools, by which so much good had already been accomplished, and he would not abandon Bible-teaching in the schools. In a memorandum written for his own guidance in

replying to questions in the House, and dated May 26th, 1870, he says, "I cannot assent to any amendment which shall prevent a time being fixed within school hours for instruction in religious subjects in a rate-provided school, or which shall prevent the school boards from allowing the schoolmaster of such school to give Bible lessons during such time."

The great fear was that between the furious assaults of the Birmingham party on the one side, and the strong dislike to any system of public schools entertained by the denominationalists on the other, the bill might suffer shipwreck. Writing to Mr. Forster (March 24th) regarding one of the concessions made to the League party, that eminent educationist, Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth, said—

"I fear that the secularists and the Nonconformists are not satisfied with the concessions made by you, viz. that in all schools a continuous time shall be devoted solely to that instruction for which the State gives aid, and that in schools founded and supported by the rates, the buildings shall be available, before and after the usual school hours, for such religious instruction as any communion may desire to give to scholars whose parents are connected with it. . . . I expected that any attempt, by such concessions, to settle in whole or in part the constitution of the schools founded and supported by the rates, would fail

either, on the one hand, to satisfy the extreme Liberal minority, or, on the other hand, if it satisfied them, would provoke a fatal opposition to the bill from the Church and the other religious bodies. Nevertheless, I think you were quite right in trying the result of these two concessions; for you leave the extreme Liberal party without excuse, and in a position fatal to their influence in the House on this question. They must now endeavour to postpone the education of the people, either till religious equality is attained by the disestablishment of the Church, or until positivism is set up, if not instead of, then on an equality with, Christianity. I do not for a moment doubt what your decision is. You will carry your bill in all essential features as it stands if you are simply resolute and calm; but, of course, not without the price which every statesman has to pay in serving his country. You will have to do what I have done over and over again in this cause—you will have to disappoint some of your friends, in order that the education of the people may not be indefinitely postponed."

There was another old friend of his Leeds days, the man who had been his associate when he was first engaged in grappling with the difficulties of a scheme of national education, who wrote to him about this time. This was Dr. Hook, formerly Vicar of Leeds, and then Dean of Chichester. "The truth is," said Dr. Hook, "I have always

regarded the religious question as merely a political squabble." Dr. Hook's views were certainly not those of Mr. Forster; but in this great controversy of 1870, it must be confessed that religion and politics were most curiously and inextricably mixed up together.

Bradford, which had sent Mr. Miall to the House of Commons as Mr. Forster's colleague, had always contained a large body of Liberals who felt strongly upon the question of religious equality. Many of them felt keenly now what they conceived to be the retrograde character of the Education Bill, and its author was assailed not merely by the vehement denunciations of the League, but by the private appeals of those who were his intimate personal friends, and who had hitherto been among his most earnest and powerful political supporters.

Any man might have been forgiven for quailing before the strong influences which were now brought to bear upon Mr. Forster to induce him either to abandon his bill for the present, or to recast it in such a manner as to make it acceptable to the Liberationists and the Birmingham League. It would be useless to attempt to conceal the fact that he was greatly affected by this action on the part of so many whose friendship and goodwill he valued, but he certainly did not quail. To recast the bill would have been to ensure its rejection probably in the House of Commons,

certainly in the House of Lords. Mr. Forster was bent upon one object only. He was determined, now that the opportunity for doing so had presented itself, to get the children of England into school, and that object he was resolved to attain, even although in doing so he might make shipwreck of his position as member for Bradford.

In a letter of this date to Mrs. Charles Fox, he says, "Thank thee for the enclosed; but still more for thy own letter. I value ——'s approval, but thine is much more precious to me on a matter like this, which has gone close home to my heart and conscience." A few days later he writes to the same lady, "It does rest much with me just now whether or no the State shall decree against religion—decree that it is a thing of no account. Well, with my assent the State shall not do this, and I believe I can prevent it, though very probably by my own ostracism; but that does not matter."

On May 18th, the Cabinet having agreed to propose various amendments relating to the religious question which Forster felt would not satisfy the Radical opposition, he wrote to Lord Ripon, strongly urging certain considerations which he wished to be submitted to Mr. Gladstone.

"There are very many indications on both sides of the House," he said, "that if we do take the lead, we may now make a settlement by (*a*) a time-table conscience clause for all public elemen-

tary schools; (*b*) exclusion of the Catechism from the schools provided and managed by the rate-payers; (*c*) limitation of rate-aid to denominational schools of payment for secular results, and to such an amount as would oblige their managers to pay *something* for denominational management. If, then, these things be proposed together, I believe there will be a give-and-take feeling all round; but if we propose (*a*) without declaring our views as to (*b*) and (*c*), everybody will be suspicious, the Unionists and Opposition will fear further concessions by us to the Leaguers, and the latter will think we are opposing them on the point on which they care most."

These views were duly communicated to Mr. Gladstone, and they bore fruit in the statements made by the Prime Minister when the committee stage of the bill was reached. Before this, however, Forster had to face a very trying ordeal—a vigorous attack upon him by those Bradford Liberals who sympathized with the League. He had gone down to Bradford during the Whitsuntide recess, and the League party took the opportunity to bring their influence to bear upon him, in order to induce him to alter the bill in accordance with their wishes. It will have been gathered from what has already been stated, that Mr. Forster was more nearly in agreement with this section of his constituents than was generally supposed. If he was resolved on no consideration

to allow religious teaching to be excluded from the schools, he was equally anxious to do what he could to prevent the employment of the rates or other public funds for denominational purposes. Again, he was now attacked at Bradford because of the permissive character of the compulsion to be applied by the boards, and he had to defend this feature of the bill, although it was one of which personally he did not approve, his original proposal having been in favour of general and absolute compulsion. Loyal at all times to his colleagues, his loyalty was never more conspicuous than when he had to defend their policy on points upon which he was unable to agree with them; and his constituents at Bradford, when they reproached him because of the defective character of the bill with regard to compulsion, could never have dreamt, from the manner in which he defended the measure, that he was not himself heart and soul in its favour on that particular point. It cannot be said that he succeeded in removing the objections of the Leaguers at Bradford to the bill, but his reply to them seems to have given satisfaction elsewhere. Mr. Gladstone wrote immediately after reading the report of his speech, to thank him for it. "It is difficult," said he, "either for you or for me, or for any one, to speak or converse at any length without betraying one's personal preferences on this or that point, but I think you have evidently and successfully

endeavoured to avoid committing yourself or the Government."

The Prime Minister went on to state his concurrence in the view expressed in Mr. Forster's letter to Lord Ripon, that the only sound course, if the bill could not be maintained in its existing shape, would be to limit the application of the rate absolutely to secular purposes. Lord Ripon also wrote from Balmoral to thank Mr. Forster for his speech to his constituents.

"Your business and mine," he continued, "is simply to try and get the bill through without alterations to which we object. If Gladstone prefers to carry it by the aid of the Tories rather than by conciliating the bulk of the Liberals, that is his affair, not ours, and we must let him do what he likes on that point."

I have ventured to quote these words, inas much as they bear upon one of the gravest complaints urged against Mr. Forster by those who objected to his management of the Education Bill. Again and again it has been alleged against him as a serious offence that he was content to rely upon Conservative votes in carrying his measure, regardless of the feelings and wishes of his own political associates. There can be no doubt that it was the belief that this accusation was well founded, which contributed more than anything else to the embitterment of his relations from that time forward with no inconsiderable section of the

Liberal party. Those who charged him with thus bidding for Conservative support in order to silence his own friends wrong him grievously, as can readily be proved by indisputable documentary evidence.

The fate of the bill, even after his appearance before his constituents, was still in suspense. No one could be quite sure that Mr. Gladstone intended to press forward with it during that session. Mr. Gladstone himself held strongly to the bill in the shape in which it had first been introduced; but he had been startled and alarmed by the rising of the Liberal party against it, and he did not appear to share the robust self-confidence with which Mr. Forster faced the formidable flank attacks that were being delivered upon the Government from the benches below the gangway.

As the date fixed for returning to a discussion of the measure in the House of Commons drew near, the Cabinet felt constrained to proceed with the bill, and it was resolved that Mr. Gladstone should open the debate in committee by making a statement as to the changes which ministers were willing to introduce in order to satisfy their friends. It was in consequence of this determination that Mr. Forster submitted to Mr. Gladstone (June 12th) a memorandum on the subject of the measure and the rival amendments which had been proposed by the representatives of the different sections of their own party.

"The first question which suggests itself," said Mr. Forster in this memorandum, "is, Why listen to either of their amendments? Why not stick to our bill as it stands? Our proposal that the majority should have what religious teaching it pleases while the minority is protected, is logical and impartial in theory, and would work well in practice. Can we not, then, carry it? Yes, with the help of the Opposition; but I fear a majority of our side of the House would vote against it. All the Radicals, not merely men like Fawcett, but earnest supporters of the bill like Mundella, all the Dissenters, from Baines to Richards, would find themselves forced to oppose us, and they would be followed, or rather led, into the lobby by the Whigs, by Sir George Grey and Whitbread, and all our best friends, like Brand, would beg us to prevent a division which would break up the party."

Clearly, Mr. Forster, when he penned this memorandum, had no liking for the idea of carrying the bill by means of the votes of the Opposition and against those of his own party. After discussing the various amendments, he declared himself in favour of one proposed by Mr. Cowper Temple, which was virtually identical with his own suggestion to Lord Ripon in the letter of May 18th. By this amendment it was ordered that no catechism or religious formulary, distinctive of any particular denomination, should be taught in the public schools.

"It may be said," continued Mr. Forster, in his memorandum, "that this plan is unjust, inasmuch as it does not give the majority which prefers catechisms the same chance as the majority which does not, and it is insufficient because it still leaves the boards free to quarrel as to whether they will have the Scriptural teaching or purely secular, or the quasi-secular schools suggested by Richards. To the last objection the sole reply, and to my mind the sufficient reply, is that this plan will be acceptable to a large majority in the House and in the country, because by excluding the catechism it silences the rallying cries of controversy, and limits the range for dispute; and because it binds by Act of Parliament to have none of the theoretical character teaching which would naturally be given by the schoolmaster to young children in a common school, but to which the local bodies wish to be guided by Parliament.

"With regard to the majorities which decidedly prefer catechisms, especially the Catholics, I think we can and should meet their case. I confess I cannot but think this would have been easier to do if we had framed the bill in accordance with my original memorandum, and, prescribing Bible lessons as a rule, had then made allowance for exceptional localities desiring either purely secular or distinctive schools."

On June 16th the debate on the bill was at last resumed, and Mr. Gladstone then made a state-

ment which in substance was merely an amplification of Mr. Forster's suggestion. On one point, however, a proposal was made which is not to be found in Mr. Forster's memorandum. Forster, it will be remembered, had expressed himself in favour of limiting the aid from the rates to purely secular purposes. Mr. Gladstone now proposed that the local boards should not contribute to the voluntary schools under any circumstances whatever; but that those schools should be allowed to draw from the Exchequer instead of from the rates, and that an increased grant, suggested at fifty per cent. in addition to the grant then given, should be paid to the voluntary schools in lieu of any assistance from the local boards. From whom this proposal first came, it would be idle now to inquire. One thing, however, is clear—that it was not contained in the memorandum of suggested amendments to the bill which Mr. Forster submitted to Mr. Gladstone only four days before the latter spoke in the House. This increased grant to denominational schools was the point aimed at by the League in its attack upon the bill. An amendment refusing any increased grant to denominational schools, or payment for any religious instruction whatever, and in favour of universal compulsion, was proposed by Mr. Richards, and, after a prolonged debate, during which many speeches of great importance were made, it was defeated on June 24th by 421 votes to 60. Among

the sixty who thus voted against the Ministry were to be found not a few of the leading Radicals in the House, including Mr. Forster's colleague, Mr. Miall, and his constituent, Mr. Alfred Illingworth.

In his diary Mr. Forster speaks of June 30th as the day on which the bill passed through its crisis. On that occasion Sir Stafford Northcote attacked the Government proposals for the exclusion of catechisms and religious formularies from the rate schools. The Government and their supporters were united in opposing Sir Stafford's amendment, and it was rejected by a large majority, the committee adhering to the ministerial proposals. The committee stage lasted until the 21st of July, and endless was the wrangling and disputation over that religious difficulty which practical experience has since shown to be to so large an extent imaginary.

It was whilst the Bill was in the crisis of its fate that a great change took place in the position of its author. Lord Clarendon's death had caused a vacancy in the Cabinet, and Mr. Forster was invited to take the vacant seat. In his diary he mentions that Mr. Gladstone asked him to walk from the House with him, "and offered me in a very pleasant way a seat in the Cabinet, retaining my present position." This promotion, occurring at that particular moment, bore evidence to the success with which he had managed the bill up

to this point in the House; and throughout the country it was regarded as merely a confirmation of the position he had now secured in the political world.

It was on July 22nd that the bill was read a third time and sent up to the House of Lords, and in a little more than a fortnight (August 9th, 1870) it had received the royal assent. Many changes had been introduced into it during its passage through Parliament, but its essential features —the division of the country into school districts, the ascertainment of the educational wants of each district, and the establishment of a system under which those wants should in due course be supplied—remained in the same shape as that in which they had been set forth in Mr. Forster's original memorandum. One notable feature of the debates must be mentioned. The 25th clause, which was hereafter to be the cause of so prolonged and bitter a struggle, passed through the House of Commons unnoticed and undebated. It was left for the lynx eye of some outsider to detect in it the germs of possible evil of the most serious kind.*

As not a little interest attaches to the changes which the bill underwent during its passage through Parliament, it will be well at this point briefly to indicate them. The first was the

* There were twenty-three divisions on the bill in the House of Commons, and six in the House of Lords.

introduction of a time-table conscience clause, limiting to certain fixed hours the teaching of religion, and thus enabling parents, if they wished, to withhold their children from such instruction. The time allowed for the voluntary supply of the educational deficiencies of a district was reduced from the original "year of grace" to six months. The department was permitted at once to order the election of a school board, if a town council or the ratepayers desired it. It was provided that no distinctive catechism or religious formulary should be taught in any board school. The method originally suggested for the election of school boards, namely, by town councils and vestries, was changed, and the principle of popular election by the ratepayers and burgesses adopted. The cumulative vote and the ballot were introduced into the mode of election—the latter only applying, however, in the first instance to London. A single school board for London, with a paid chairman, was provided. The age for compulsory attendance was extended by one year—from five to thirteen, instead of from five to twelve. It was prescribed that no grants for the building of voluntary schools should be made after December 31st, 1870. The provision originally found in the bill by which school boards were to be empowered to grant assistance to voluntary schools in their district, provided all such schools received assistance on equal terms, was omitted. It is not

necessary to dwell on the importance of these changes, or to point to the obvious fact that in the main they were favourable to the public as opposed to the voluntary schools.

Among the men who rendered him invaluable assistance while the bill was passing through the House of Commons, mention must be made of Mr. Cumin and Mr. (now Sir Francis) Sandford. The latter eminent public servant still recalls, in connection with the passing of the bill, two of Mr. Forster's characteristics. One was his intense anxiety to get the principle of the bill—universal provision for education—carried in the House of Commons. In comparison with this, everything else seemed to him to be of small importance. "Once let me get the splinter-bar of the fifth clause through, and they may do what they like with the rest," was his frequent remark. He was willing to yield upon almost every other question—compulsion, denominational teaching, treatment of voluntary schools—so long as he could write upon the Statute-book a declaration in the name of Parliament that English children were henceforth to have everywhere the opportunity of being educated. The other characteristic recalled by Sir Francis was the unflagging energy and industry with which he worked, and expected everybody else to work when they were occupied with him. He would, when the bill was in committee, often be in his place in the House at three

o'clock in the morning; yet after these late sittings he never failed to be at his desk in Eccleston Square or the Council Office as early as most of the clerks. Sometimes, indeed, if an amendment called for immediate consideration, he would invite Sir Francis to breakfast with him at nine o'clock, in order to consider a form of words which had only been suggested at two or three. Many men, of course, have worked as hard as Forster when holding high office. But in one respect he was exceptionally fortunate. He not only succeeded in getting his subordinates to work as hard as he himself did, but in infusing his own spirit of hopeful enthusiasm into them. Every man who was with him in the department during this stormy time was his sworn personal adherent, and not one but would have strained every nerve in order to aid him in his great task, so deep and true was the attachment to himself which he had succeeded in evoking among the permanent officials.

It has been necessary to say something of the obstruction which Forster had to encounter whilst he was carrying his great measure through Parliament, and of the personal attacks to which he was subjected in many instances on the part of his own friends and supporters. It would be unfair, however, to lose sight of the other side. Whilst the supporters of the League openly denounced him as a traitor to the principles of his youth, and a

time-server who had sacrificed his party to his own personal ambition, the vast majority of his fellow-countrymen rejoiced in the courage which had enabled him successfully to pilot his bill through the shoals and quicksands of committee. Above all there was a general feeling of thankfulness that he had been enabled to resist those who were anxious to give a purely secular character to the education of our young in the public schools. Many were the letters received from friends, known and unknown, congratulating him upon the fact that, owing to his exertions, the Bible and Bible-teaching were not to be excluded from our English schools.

Forster and his wife and children set off on a tour in Scotland immediately after the close of the session; but news of the dramatic catastrophe of Sedan reached them at Ballachulish, and he was compelled to hurry back to town to a meeting of the Cabinet.

Writing to Sir Arthur Helps, whilst on his way to Scotland (August 26th, 1870), he said—

"I have been much out of sorts since I left London, but am getting better. I do not like the look of things. I am not like you, a disbeliever in the future—I should give up politics if I were. But I fancy our immediate future is not pleasant.

"We have to get organization without losing freedom, and this is not easy. But what a grand

task it is—to organize the English-speaking race. I wish all of us who have really lived twenty years —that is to say, who have not been wasting our experience for these last twenty years—could live them over again; but when I have become useful I shall wear out."

It need hardly be said that it was the stirring events which were then happening on the Continent which renewed within him the ideas he had so long entertained as to the need for the organization and federation of the English-speaking races of the world.

In the month of October he went to Balmoral as minister in attendance on the Queen. It was his first introduction to her Majesty in that capacity, and it marked the beginning of a personal intercourse with the sovereign which, throughout the rest of his life, was to Forster a source of unalloyed pleasure. The unique position of the Queen—a woman and the ruler of the greatest empire in the world—had always moved him with a sense of pathos, and inspired him with a feeling of chivalrous devotion to the throne. From the time when he first came in contact with her, as his knowledge of her Majesty increased, and as his opportunities of serving her multiplied, his desire to do everything that lay within his power, to lighten for her by even the smallest degree the burden of the empire, became constantly more ardent. That the Queen herself appreciated this

depth of loyal devotion was proved by the words which she addressed to his wife after his death.

Some extracts from his letters from Balmoral may be made without impropriety.

To his Wife.

"Perth, 8 a.m., Tuesday, October 11th, 1870.

"A short line, my dearest, before I leave Perth. I had a beautiful journey yesterday, though a cold one. The Darlington country takes me back curiously to my opening manhood. We had a beautiful steam across the Forth, but I have my doubts how Myles approved of it—he sat as though he was nailed to his chair. I had a good dinner here and a roast by the fire. No tidings of the Chancellor. This morning again it is clear, but cold; and, in fact, they have had little rain here, but hail and much snow on the mountains.

"I go on by 9.20 train.

"Thy loving husband,

"W. E. Forster."

To his Wife.

"Balmoral Castle, October 11th, 1870.

"I reached here at 5.15, after a grand but cold drive over the hills twenty miles to Spital; then a change of carriage and lunch; then fifteen miles to Braemar—I walking up the hill, a stiff climb of 800 feet; a short shower on the top, with one of the finest rainbows I ever saw.

Another change of carriage at Braemar, a cup of tea in the landlord's room, and a quick drive of nine miles here through Colonel Farquharson's magnificent woods. . . . Myles opened his eyes, and shook his head somewhat at the hills; but in general he is philosophically unmoved, as if he was born to the purple."

"Wednesday morning, October 19th, 1870.

"I am just come in from a short inspection of Her Majesty's village school, built for forty or fifty children—attendance not complete till the Queen goes and winter comes. A young master fresh from Aberdeen University teaching the first class Latin and the lowest their letters. . . . During dinner the Queen gave me in a black envelope a photograph of the Crown Prince of Prussia, telling me it was his thirty-ninth birthday. When we went to Lochnagar, I tried, through one of the gillies, to get a collie. This has reached the Queen, and Lady Ely tells me she is going to give me a collie if she can find one. After dinner she favoured me with a long talk; and somehow, I do not know how, I told her about the children, which interested her. I told her, too, about my father and mother, and altogether she was most pleasant and kind. . . . The normal life here is breakfast at 9.30—all the household meals here are very punctual—letters and work till 2. Yesterday I tackled the revised code. The Queen drives

out about 11.30, and again about 3.30. She does not return till past dark, nor do we. Then the second post comes in, with thy dear letters generally and the evening papers, and there is the possibility of the Queen wanting me before dinner. Everything is so quiet and silent that I have always to go through a mental process of proof that it is not Sunday. But telegrams and despatch-boxes all through the day are fired at our fortress from the rushing crowd without. . . .

"And now about plans. I leave by the messenger at 1 on Monday, probably with De Grey, who comes on Saturday night; Cardwell, who relieves me, coming, I expect, on Sunday morning. I am yet in doubt whether I get to thee on Tuesday evening, or whether I have to go straight to London and come to thee on Wednesday for two or three days before we return together."

"Balmoral Castle, October 20th, 1870.

"I must be short this morning, my dearest, as I have much office work before the messenger goes, and am in momentary expectation of telegrams. We were greatly agitated yesterday evening by a telegram from F. O. in cypher, saying that peace news had come from Brussels. May it be true! But I do not like its not being confirmed."

"Balmoral Castle, October 22nd, 1870.

"This must be a very short note, as I have been detained by work—F. O., Med., and Vet. till

12, and I am soon off on a real mountain walk with Collins, Prince Leopold's tutor, and an active climber, having refused to go out deer shooting. . . . So far as I can see, my present plan is to arrive at Edinburgh at 10 p.m. on Monday. I have asked the Lord Advocate whether he cares to talk Scotch education between then and 10.20 next morning, when I tell him I must leave. This would bring me to Burley station at 5.18.

"Peace seems to me much more hopeful; any way, we are doing what we can."

"Balmoral Castle, 8.30 a.m., October 23rd, 1870.

"On Sunday, the messenger leaves at 9, so I have but little time. Thy letter of the 21st I found on my return from a grand mountain walk with Collins and Dr. Fox last evening, in which, thanks to my alpenstock, I ran down the steep side of Lochnagar like a boy, and to-day am not stiff. . . . Cardwell turns up this morning—I suppose has arrived—and Harrison, the deputy-clerk of the Council, to-day. So to-morrow we declare the assent to the marriage * in form, and then De Grey and self, and I trust my dog, rush off with messenger; but where, I know not. That depends on whether there be a Cabinet on Tuesday, which also depends on the reply to our despatches. . . ."

The first school board elections took place in

* The marriage of the Princess Louise and the Marquis of Lorne.

November, and Forster watched them with the closest interest and a well-founded confidence in the result of the legislation in which he had taken so great a part. In almost every case boards were elected, not for the purpose of squabbling over the religious difficulty, but in order to carry out the practical work of education, and to bring the children into the schools. There was one novel feature of the election which excited interest altogether apart from the question of education. This was the operation of the cumulative vote, which had been introduced into the bill during its passage through the House of Commons on the proposition of Lord Frederick Cavendish. Forster himself had not previously been in favour of the principle of so-called proportional representation, and the idea, so far as the Education Bill was concerned, was not his own. But when it had been adopted by the House, he was loyal and unyielding in defending it against all assailants. There can be no doubt that this mode of voting did secure for comparatively small denominations a full representation on the various boards; but it is equally indisputable that in some cases its effect was to enable minorities to overthrow majorities. It had also for a time the effect of preventing anything like organized action on the part of political parties in connection with school board contests. This result Forster regarded with unmitigated satisfaction, and the present writer can well recall

the mingled anger and disgust which Mr. Forster displayed when discussing with him the success of an ingenious scheme adopted by the Liberals of Leeds for the purpose of enabling a school board election to be carried out on party lines. "We do not want party lines," said Mr. Forster, "in these elections; we want everybody, whether he belongs to a big party or a little one, to the Church of England or to the smallest Dissenting sect, to have his fair say in the choice of the people who are to manage the education of his children; and I think you Liberals of Leeds have behaved very badly in upsetting the original intention of Parliament when it passed the bill."

All this, however, lay in the future. In 1870, even in constituencies where the political forces were best organized, the cumulative vote was accepted on its merits, and the result was the election of boards remarkable for the ability, the public spirit, and the public worth represented by their members. To Forster's great delight, Lord Lawrence, ex-Viceroy of India, agreed to become chairman of the first School Board for London, and everywhere notable men came forward to assist in the great work.

Even the practical results which the bill secured through this election, however, failed to soften the rancour of the members of the League. The first serious blow which was struck at Mr. Forster after the elections took place was dealt by

his own constituents at Bradford. The thanks which he received from those whom he represented in Parliament for having passed the Education Act was a vote of censure. He had not been warned of the intention of the extreme party to propose such a vote, and there can be no doubt that he felt it keenly, though in his diary he makes no comment upon the occurrence. There was a crowded meeting in the St. George's Hall, and Mr. Forster spoke for nearly two hours, a great portion of his speech being necessarily occupied with the questions raised by the war which was then raging in France. He concluded, however, by making some reference to the attacks which had been made upon him in connection with the Education Act. He had seen it stated, he said, that he was less of a Radical than he had been before. "That is not a charge I mind. Like most men who have lived to my time of life, in private matters at any rate, perhaps in public, there are some charges I dislike, because I fear there may be some truth in them. But a charge which I know to be untrue I do not object to. In fact, I do not feel it. I never was more convinced than I am at this moment that, in dealing with the condition of England as it is at present, we must be unsparing in our efforts to root out abuses. . . . I trust that the day will never come in which a man in my position will for a moment change his views because he thinks that they

cannot be palatable to a portion of his constituency. Now, you must not suppose that I think, upon this matter of education, that the feeling of the majority of my constituents differs from my own. I do not believe that it does; but I say if I believed it did, it would make no difference."

On sitting down after making this straightforward declaration, it became clear that a very large section of the meeting was hostile to him. When the usual vote thanking him for his services during the past year in Parliament was proposed, it was met by an amendment expressing disapproval of the Education Bill, and deeply deploring the means adopted for carrying it; in other words, the ammunition of Birmingham had been imported into Bradford for the purpose of wounding its distinguished representative in his own political home. The charge openly formulated against Mr. Forster by those who spoke in support of the amendment was, that in passing the Education Bill he had legislated for the majority of the country as a whole, and not for the majority of his own political supporters, and that in doing so he had betrayed that section of his party which had reposed the greatest trust in him. The hostile amendment was carried by a small majority.

Although taken by surprise, Mr. Forster was equal to the occasion. He had no complaint to make of those who repaid him in this manner for the work he had accomplished during the past

year. "You have only done," he said, "what I have always expected Bradford people to do—to say what you think. Still, I believe the time will come, and that before long, when many of you will regret much that expression of opinion. I am quite sure that those children who by the help of this bill will get an education which they otherwise would not just now have obtained will, if this resolution be remembered afterwards, tell their parents who have voted for it that they ought not to have done so."

The Liberals of Bradford, as well as Englishmen generally, are now in a position to decide whether the party which moved this vote of censure upon Mr. Forster or the man who carried the Education Act was in the right. Of the splendid results of the Act of 1870, the whole nation is now so fully conscious that figures are hardly necessary to convey it to the mind of the reader. On August 31st, 1886, the number of schools on the list for inspection under the Act in England and Wales had reached the total of 19,133. The number of scholars on the register was, in round numbers, four and a half millions, the average attendance being three and a half millions. In 1870, before the Act came into operation, the number of schools inspected was 8,281, the accommodation provided 1,878,584, the average attendance, 1,152,389, and the total number of teachers 28,000. In 1874, the numbers were:

schools, 13,163; accommodation, 2,861,319; average attendance, 1,678,759; and teachers, 48,000. In 1886, they stood at: schools, 19,133; accommodation, 5,145,292; average attendance, 3,438,425; and teachers, 87,000. The percentage of the scholars examined to the estimated population of the country had risen from 2·86 in 1870 to 8·77 in 1886, and the number of school boards established in the latter year was 2,225. All this was achieved in Forster's lifetime.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE STRUGGLE WITH THE BIRMINGHAM LEAGUE.

"THERE is nothing that *riles* mankind so much as seeing the objects they desire accomplished by other means than their own. Thus the Radicals are as indignant at popular education being brought about with Conservative assistance as Mazzini and Garibaldi at the unity of Italy being brought about by Victor Emanuel. But the Mialls of England and Italy must submit to their lot. *Sic vos non vobis* is the law of the world." It was Forster's old friend, Lord Houghton, who wrote these lines—the *postscript* to a friendly note deploring the writer's absence from home in January, 1871, at a time when Forster had offered himself for a few days at Fryston. The reader has seen how bitterly the author of the Education Act was being condemned by his old friends, even by his own constituents, because he had succeeded in accomplishing the great object for which all educationists had for years been striving. Every kind of evil motive was imputed to him by these, his former admirers and supporters. Ignorant of

the fact that some of the features of the measure, which in their eyes were most objectionable, had been imported into the bill not only against Forster's will, but in spite of his protests, they believed that he had gratuitously abandoned the principles he had professed up to the moment at which he took office.* Not knowing that to no two men in the Ministry had the idea of carrying the measure by Conservative votes been more repugnant than to Forster and Lord Ripon, they believed that the former deliberately preferred to win the applause of his opponents rather than the approval of his own friends. And he had to bear the brunt of it all alone. Birmingham stormed at him; Bradford upbraided; the Nonconformists suspected or detested him; philosophical Radicals wrote of him as "the great trimmer;" and the whole Radical party, with some honourable exceptions, looked upon him as a deserter, or something worse—a traitor. It is well that one should bear in mind the wise judgment of a cool-headed, warm-hearted cynic like Lord Houghton, who, without knowing the truth as to Forster's real opinions concerning the bill, could still clearly see the ludicrous side of the controversy raised by his antagonists.

Still, there was much that was painful to Forster in the attacks to which he was now being

* In order to prevent any misconception, I should say that I refer chiefly to the question of compulsion.

subjected; and though strangers imagined that his somewhat rough exterior made him impervious to any assaults, incapable of feeling even the most cruel misrepresentation, all who really knew him were aware that certain forms of attack occasioned him the keenest suffering. Especially was this the case if any one he had loved and trusted seemed to have turned against him. He did not expect the outer world to understand him, and was calmly stoical under attacks made in ignorance or under a misapprehension of his character and motives; but when those who knew him turned against him, the case was different. Here is a letter which he addressed to his old friend, Mr. Lloyd Jones, who had disclaimed any connection with a bitter attack which had been made upon him in a paper called the *Beehive*, with which Mr. Jones himself had some connection:—

"January 31st, 1870.

"DEAR MR. JONES,

"I am exceedingly glad to get your letter. I expect, of course, political opposition, and also, out of much opposition and alongside of it, my share of personal attack. But such only becomes painful if there is any reason to fear that it comes from any one I believed to be a friend. Some one sent me the *Beehive*, and I confess there was such a curious mixture of knowledge of my domestic life with spiteful lies, that, seeing you

had something to do with the paper, I could not bear the possible suspicion that you had anything to do with the letter, and I was intending to write to you to have it all out. However, now the letter merely amuses me, as I cannot conceive that it comes from any one for whom I really care. It must be from some one who does not scruple to try to make professed friendship, and the free intercourse of hospitality, the means of giving a false accusation the appearance of truth; but any one so mean can do no real harm. If it gets to my dear old friend, Thomas Cooper, how indignant it will make make him! . . . I hope you are well and comfortable. I wish the busy rush of life would let us meet and have a quiet chat on matters on which we agree, and also on those on which we do not.

"Yours ever faithfully,

"W. E. FORSTER."

"As you say," he writes to an old personal friend, "I am abused just now; but it does not try my temper, though for a time I fear this rancour may diminish my power of usefulness. I was *hurt* by ——'s conduct; but, having let him know this, I am content. Keep a look-out for me as to the real working of the Act. . . . I agree with you there is a gale ahead, and our good ship has her timbers strained. Would that I was a more able seaman; but one thing is clear

—one must not desert the ship." Again he writes later on to the same friend: "*Thank* you for your letter—inspiriting and comforting. I can honestly say I believe I shall try to do what is right, regardless of the consequences to myself. If religion is to be separated by Act of Parliament from any part of the daily life of Englishmen, much more of English children, it shall not be done by me—nor, if I can help it, by any one else without the English people declaring what they will on the matter. If they so decide, I suppose it must be; but the responsibility shall rest with them, and I do not believe they will assume it."

Why do I dwell at such length upon these attacks? my reader may ask. Are not all public men subjected to a similar fate? To a certain degree they are; but these attacks upon Mr. Forster, and his subsequent unpopularity with a section of his own party, were not merely the reward which he received at the moment for having got the children of England into school. They were maintained with singular persistency for years, and they had much to do in determining not only his own political career, but the course of public events in this country.

Mr. Bright, though he had been a member of the Cabinet when the Education Bill was under consideration, was one of those who shared the views of the Birmingham League on the questions at issue. He was at this time in ill health, and

had been compelled in consequence to withdraw from the Government.

"There is much hot water in Birmingham on the education question," he wrote (March 5th, 1871). "I wish you would do something to soften the feeling there. I send you a letter, not a pleasant one for you, but I wish you to know the truth. It is from one of the most able and influential men there—Mr. Dale, minister of the Independents. He does not know that I send it to you. Pray read it, and don't be angry with it, but do what you can to meet the suspicion and hostile feeling which it expresses. I know little of the bill, except that I think the cumulative vote monstrous and intolerable. Here (Rochdale) we have a Catholic priest at the head of the poll, and the minority in many places are in power, and doing their best to thwart the objects of the bill. I suspect the haste with which the measure was passed has done much to weaken the Government with the Liberals in the country. . . . Forgive this criticism, which I write with grief, but with all sincerity."

MR. FORSTER *to* MR. BRIGHT.

"Education Department,
"March 7th, 1871.

"MY DEAR BRIGHT,

"I am very glad to see your handwriting, though the subject on which you write is not of

the pleasantest. I return you Mr. Dale's letter. So far as I know, it is the first sign of wish expressed by him or any of his friends, with regard to the Birmingham inspection. I often talk to Dixon on educational matters. I wonder he has said nothing to me about it. I should gladly have listened to Mr. Dale on the matter, and I cannot but think his suspicion that I would not do so is not worthy either of him or me. But let that pass. To incur undeserved suspicion is part of our daily work: . . . I need not tell you what grief it is to me that some of our friends dislike the Education Act; but if I had to go through last year's work again, I could not act otherwise. I never felt more clearly in any public matter that I was doing what I thought to be right, and not what I thought to be wrong. I do not think we can say that the Act was passed in a hurry. It took twenty-three days in the Commons—exactly the same number as the Irish Land Bill. As regards the cumulative vote, it was not proposed by the Government; there was no division against it, and it was supported as much by our side as the others, amongst others by Winterbotham, and not opposed on behalf of the Dissenters or the League. In Birmingham, I see it has resulted in the probable majority of the ratepayers being in a minority in the board; but that was because they tried to elect the whole board. The polling showed clearly they could have elected a majority.

In many places, London especially, it is clear that those who think with the League owe to it their return.

"I am rejoiced to hear you are gaining strength, and long to see you back in the House, even though below the gangway. For myself, what with incessant work, the weariness of debates, and the unpleasantness of suspicion, I am getting tired; and if this year I can get my Education Act to work, pass my Ballot Bill, and, above all, get De Grey back from the States with the Alabama question solved, I do not care how soon either Disraeli or Mr. Dale turn us out.

"Yours ever faithfully,

"W. E. FORSTER."

The work of the session of 1871 was exceptionally severe so far as Forster was concerned, and it would have tried him even if there had not been this great feud with the Nonconformists and the Leaguers to occupy his thoughts and strain his nerves. Lord Ripon had gone to the United States to settle a new Alabama Treaty (in a subsequent chapter Forster's part in the political relations of England and America at this time will receive due attention); there was a bad outbreak of cattle plague, which called both for administrative and legislative work; there was a Scotch Education Bill to be carried, in fulfilment of a promise made the previous year; and, above all,

the Ballot Bill which had been committed to his charge had to be introduced and piloted through the House of Commons. On the question of secret voting, he, like other men, had seen reason to change his early opinions. Though he might still think, as he had thought when he was reasoning with the Charlists of Bradford in 1848, that it was better for an Englishman to record his vote in the open light of day, he had been driven to the conclusion that for practical purposes, for the prevention of intimidation, and for securing the purity of election, the ballot had become necessary. He was anxious, when entrusted with the measure, to make the system of voting which it prescribed one of real secrecy, and he devoted much of his time to the study of the ballots adopted in other countries and in the colonies, in order that he might give the electors of the United Kingdom a system which should be at once simple and secure. There is no need to say that the result of his efforts in this direction was satisfactory. The ballot now in use in this country, and for which we are indebted to Mr. Forster, has at least the merit of being eminently practical as a method of recording votes without giving publicity to the opinions of the voters save under circumstances of a special nature. But 1871 was not to witness the passing of the Ballot Act, and very early after the introduction of the measure, on February 20th, the suspicions of its friends were

roused not merely as to its fate in the House of Lords, but as to the earnestness of ministers regarding it. Among others, Mr. Bright, who was still prevented by the state of his health from attending the House of Commons, wrote to Forster, protesting against the indifference which, as he believed, ministers were displaying with regard to their bill and to other measures of a Radical character. "My friends here asked me," he said, "What is the good of having two professed Radicals in the Cabinet? To which I can give no answer."

MR. FORSTER *to* MR. BRIGHT.

"80, Eccleston Square, London,
"April 26th, 1871.

"MY DEAR BRIGHT,

"Your old member of the House must be either somewhat suspicious or very credulous; and if he really supposes that the Ballot Bill will be shunted for Local Taxation or Licensing, he cannot have learnt by his experience how to test a *canard*. Such a notion has never been even entertained by the Government. Gladstone has repeatedly in the House said that Ballot comes next to the Army Regulation Bill, and I should not have taken charge of it if I had not known that the Government meant to pass it. For myself, I see, as you do, the dangers of post-

ponement, and am as anxious and determined to get it through this year as I was to get the Education Bill through last year.

"You say that you can give no answer to the question—What is the good of having Stansfeld and myself in the Cabinet? You know that is a question I cannot even attempt to answer.

"I will show your jobation to Stansfeld. He was not in the Cabinet when the army estimates were agreed to; but as I *was*, I do *not* feel it honest to answer your letter without saying this much, that I fully concurred in them.

"I think we were right both as regards men and stores, and that the destruction of purchase is worth its cost; but I also think that we ought to subject the army to a searching reform, which reform will be much more possible when purchase is destroyed.

"Trusting you continue better,

"I am,

"Yours ever faithfully,

"W. E. FORSTER."

It is not uninteresting to quote, in connection with this period of excessive work, and of worry and anxiety which were at least in proportion to the work, a fragment of conversation at a dinner-party preserved by Mrs. Forster. "Mr. T—— said that A—— H—— was always going about asking people what was the ideal towards which

they were working, and there was a laugh at the notion. But my dear husband did not join in it, saying that, for his part, if he was not constantly thinking of the ideal which he was working up to, he should not be able to get on at all." A record of two days' work, as given in his diary at this time, will show something of the conditions under which he strove to "work up to his ideal" of the duty of an English statesman.

"*March 9th.*—A day of deputations. Council to prohibit importation of French and Belgian cattle. National Union deputation at 12. Royal Humane Society for teaching swimming at 1.30. Musical men with Sir R. Peel at 2. Lord Howard and allies at 3.30; all on code: House; questions."

"*March 10th.*—Busy preparing code speech. Called on Gladstone, arranged for Committee of Council at 3.30 on proposed alterations of code; Gladstone, Lowe, and self at first; then Halifax and Bruce. I carried my alterations. Code debate began about 6. I spoke at end for hour and half. House very impatient towards end, and no wonder. A *warning*. Dixon divided against me, but soundly beat."

The Ballot Bill was carried successfully through the House of Commons. In carrying it Forster had to fight practically single-handed, and he had to do his work whilst literally oppressed by the labours of the department, in which the questions connected with the management or foundation of

the new schools, complaints regarding the reports of particular inspectors, or the manner in which the code affected certain classes of scholars, and all the details of the Scotch Education Bill were for ever jostling questions about the vaccination laws and the importation of foreign cattle. It says much for any man's capacity for work that he should be able to pass successfully through the ordeal of the Vice-Presidency of the Council. Never, however, was that ordeal so severe as it was in the year 1871, immediately after the passing of the Education Act, and whilst hundreds of new school boards were being established throughout the country. Nothing but the severe training both to public work and to business habits which Mr. Forster had gone through could have enabled him to endure the strain now put upon him. So far as the Ballot Bill was concerned, though he gained great praise on both sides of the House for the manner in which he piloted it through its difficulties, his labours were in vain. After eighteen sittings in committee, and long debates upon the other stages of the measure, he had the mortification of seeing the bill thrown out by the peers.

In the autumn the unsleeping hostility of the Nonconformists of the League became more pronounced. He had given such proof of his capacity both as legislator and administrator during the session, that men were openly dis-

cussing his right to the succession to the leadership in the event of Mr. Gladstone's retirement. The brilliant success of the Education Act as an educational measure—the tautology must be forgiven, for without it one could not express the truth—and the growing popularity and power which he enjoyed in Parliament, marked him out for the highest political distinction. Perhaps it was this consciousness of his growth in power that stirred up those who had once been his friends, but who had been estranged from him on the question of education, to renewed efforts to thwart his policy, and to punish him for what they regarded as his apostasy. The 25th clause had been discovered by this time. That simple provision, inserted in the measure without thought of possible harm either on the part of Mr. Forster or the Leaguers themselves, for the purpose of enabling those parents who, though not absolutely paupers, were too poor to pay the school fees to get their children into school, had now become the battle-cry of a party. Half the platforms of England were ringing with denunciation of the clause and of its author. The Birmingham party, in their attacks upon the bill, seemed bent upon concentrating on the head of Mr. Forster the whole of their virulent hostility. His assailants distinguished between him and his colleagues, and vigorous attempts were made to induce the Cabinet as a whole to treat him as a Jonah.

Comparatively brief as is the period which has elapsed since those days, it is difficult even now to understand the bitterness of the personal hostility with which Mr. Forster was thus pursued. To some extent it was no doubt due to certain characteristics of his manner, which gave offence to those who judged him merely by external appearances. I have already said that many of those who assailed him most bitterly and unfairly had no conception that in doing so they were causing him any pain. He did not wear his heart upon his sleeve, and he would sit silent, and to all outward seeming unmoved, under the most venomous assaults. His very capacity for concealing his own sufferings, and the delicate sensitiveness of his nature, seemed to add to the anger of his opponents, for whom this excuse must at least be made—that they had once loved and trusted him as strongly as they now hated and suspected him. Then, again, it was unfortunate for him that, amid his many absorbing pre-occupations and anxieties, he could not command that light and easy manner which in superficial society passes current for politeness. If he was pressed in private, by some member who caught him in the lobby or the club, with a troublesome or it might be simply an unnecessary question, at a time when his thoughts were occupied with the grave and pressing duties of his office, he did not always show the patience

that his interlocutor expected of him. Sometimes he would brush a troublesome questioner aside without thinking of his feelings. Intentionally discourteous he never was to any human being; and when he heard—as he sometimes did—that so and so had been wounded by the bluntness of his manner, he would show first surprise, and then the keenest concern.

In connection with this matter, I may be allowed to mention one of my own reminiscences of my intercourse with Mr. Forster. He came to see me at a time when he was being harassed even more severely than was usually the case, and when the attacks of one of his so-called friends upon him were of a specially malignant character. "Well," he said thoughtfully, after talking the matter over for some time, "I feel almost inclined to make up my mind to cut —— the next time I meet him in the streets or at the club. I never did such a thing in my life before, and I do not like doing it now; but what can one do when a man professes the greatest personal friendship in private, and yet says such things as these of men in public?" It was difficult to refrain from smiling when Mr. Forster thus solemnly, and with a lingering regretfulness in his tones, announced that he might be driven to take this extreme step, for it happened to be within my knowledge that the person of whom he spoke was under the distinct impression that

for months previously Forster had deliberately and of malice aforethought ignored his existence whenever they chanced to meet. Forster himself was absolutely unconscious all the time of having committed this offence. The truth is, that he suffered from shortness of sight, and over and over again would pass close to his dearest friends without being aware of his nearness to them. It is hardly to be wondered at that persons who were either on the outlook for some cause of offence, or who were conscious that their own actions had not been altogether friendly towards Forster, should mistake that which was the merest accident for a deliberate insult.

There was another reason for the special bitterness with which he was assailed in some quarters. If he had long ago dropped the "plain speech" of the Society of Friends, save in his conversation with those of his own family who belonged to the body, he had never lost the habit of speaking out very frankly when he felt that he had reason for finding fault with any one. "You and your people are behaving very badly just now," was an expression he not unfrequently used in conversation, and though it was manifestly the utterance of a man who was simply opening his mind without thought of malice or ill-will, its bluntness was apt to offend those especially who had a great belief in their own infallibility. It would not do to hide the truth on these points from the reader in speaking of that continuous

and unrelenting opposition, amounting to something very like persecution, to which Mr. Forster was at this time subjected at the hands of the coterie of politicians who had made Birmingham their head-quarters.

There were, however, not a few men among the Nonconformists who, though regretting that the Education Act had not done all that they wished on behalf of religious equality, were convinced of Mr. Forster's personal honesty and of the reality of his enthusiasm on behalf of education. Some of these were very anxious to bring about a reconciliation between the author of the Act and the representatives of the League. Among these persons was the Rev. Newman Hall, the well-known Congregational minister. Mr. Newman Hall, on behalf of the Dissenters, had asked Mr. Gladstone to meet a small number of gentlemen at his house to discuss the burning question. The result of that interview had been "to make all present feel how great were the difficulties which beset the question from the statesman's standpoint," and it had also led to a suggestion that an interview between the leading Nonconformist opponents of the Act and Mr. Forster might be beneficial. Accordingly, on November 13th Mr. Hall wrote, inviting Mr. Forster to meet Mr. Miall, Mr. Richard, Mr. Dale, of Birmingham, and other leading supporters of the League, at his house.

The next day Mr. Forster wrote to Mr. Hall as follows:—"Your proposal is most kindly meant, and just like yourself, and I should be most glad if by accepting it I could do anything to lessen misunderstanding or remove misconceptions, of which there are many. As to whether, however, such a meeting as you suggest would really do good, I think you and I could best judge by first talking the matter over together."

To his Wife.

"November 25th, 1871.

"I have just had a long call from Newman Hall, and, after telling him that he must understand that whilst I did not seek the interview, yet I would not avoid it on the understanding that I was not trapped or quoted, I said I doubted much good coming, as there was a personal set at me, partly from feeling and partly in hope of getting over Gladstone. However, it was fixed I should go to his house at eight on Friday evening, December 8th. He named Miall, whom I should like to see, and Dale. . . . I told him I could prove to any reasonable person I had worked the Act fairly, and in fact had a pleasant talk with him; but I do not suppose that comes to much. . . . (*November 27th*) I fear I cannot come down till Thursday. I am very busy: ballot, corrupt practices, education, cattle—all in a heap together. . . . (*November 28th*) I had a satis-

factory but desperately cold inspection of the cattle market. I shall try to come down on Thursday, but I am desperately worked. . . . I have had a bad, ungentlemanly letter from ——, and his lies about me in his second speech at Newcastle are astounding. I began to answer them, but I have given it up, and merely send him a cool challenge to meet me in Parliament, with a regret that his feeling of what is due to courtesy has not made him try to find out whether such discussions could not be avoided."

In due time the meeting at Mr. Newman Hall's house took place. Two of the representatives of the League invited to attend declined the invitation, though they happened to be two of those who had brought the strongest accusations against him on the platform. They were his colleague in the representation of Bradford, Mr. Miall, and Mr. Henry Richard. Among those who did come to meet Mr. Forster in free discussion upon a subject on which they had such serious differences of opinion were Mr. Dale, Mr. Arthur, Mr. Clayden, Mr. Binney, Mr. Samuel Morley, and Dr. Raleigh. The meeting was a friendly one, and the discussion lasted until nearly midnight. It cannot be said, however, to have reconciled the League party either to the Education Act or to its author. How bitter were their feelings at this time may be gathered from a sentence uttered by Sir Charles

Dilke in one of his speeches, in which he declared that "one might suppose that the Education Department was presided over by the powers of darkness instead of by good men like Sir Francis Sandford and Mr. Forster." The accusations against Mr. Forster now included not merely the nature of the Act itself, but the manner in which the Education Department was being administered. So completely had some of his opponents been blinded by their anger that they conceived him to have entered into some league for the purpose of giving the Church party and the Denominationalists an unjust advantage over the Secularists, so that even a member of Parliament did not think it unworthy of his position to compare Forster and his principal assistant to the powers of darkness. There was some consolation for the object of this virulent abuse in the fact that by the end of 1871 no fewer than three hundred school boards had been formed, and that on every side school-houses could be seen rising to bear witness to that national outburst of zeal on behalf of education which had been the immediate result of the passing of the Act of 1870. Nor to a man of Forster's sensitiveness was it a small thing that he had been fortunate enough to win, to no ordinary extent, the confidence of those who were his colleagues and subordinates in the Privy Council Office. One of the most distinguished of these, Sir Arthur Helps, addresses him as follows :—

"Leigh Park, Havant,
"Christmas Day, 1871.

"MY DEAR FORSTER,

"I wish most heartily that this may be a merry and a happy day to you and yours. I am almost sure that where you are it will be a happy day for those who surround you, as you have the gift (be careful never to lose it) of entering into everything that may amuse others and yourself.

"You are one of the few men who are worthy of being indoctrinated into the mysteries of that most difficult game of Patience that I play. N—— and I spent an evening together a little time ago. We played Patience all the time, and were ignominiously beaten by the board. As he rose up, at a ghostly hour of the night, he exclaimed, 'The War Office work is nothing when compared to this!' However, it was not to chatter to you about such things that I begun this letter.

"I wanted to take an opportunity of telling you how grateful our office, from the highest to the lowest amongst us, is to you for the very kind and appreciative manner in which you have treated us. In the natural course of things, you will some day or other leave us; but the whole office will feel that wherever you may be, whatever position you may fill, you will be a true and constant friend to us.

"Now, the other day you gave great comfort to —— (than whom a more devoted man

to the public service I never met with), in showing him that you knew and appreciated his labours. And the same with all the rest of us. Without more words, I know that every one of them would join with me, if they were now by my side, in wishing you, in the most earnest and sincere manner, every good wish of the season. Please remember me very kindly to Mrs. Forster, and believe me to be,

"Always yours,

"ARTHUR HELPS."

It was recognition of this kind—the frank expression of confidence and goodwill on the part of those nearest to him—that in Forster's opinion outweighed all the applause of the public outside. Nor was it only among his friends in the office that he was appreciated at his true worth. One of his colleagues in the Government remembers how one day, when some question of education was to be considered at the Cabinet, Mr. Forster happened to be late and kept ministers waiting. Mr. Gladstone seized the opportunity, and "quite burst out" in praise of the Vice-President of the Council, dwelling specially upon that quality in the man of the existence of which the outer world knew nothing—his tenderness.

Friendship and goodwill of this description afforded him great comfort under the unceasing attacks which were now being directed against

him by his opponents. One of their leaders had been pleased to declare that he had betrayed the Nonconformists for ambition, and Forster had been moved to write to him to ask for some proof of the accusation. None, of course, was forthcoming, but the statement showed to what lengths his opponents were ready to go. And yet what was their chief charge against him? It was formulated early in the session of 1872, when Mr. Dixon led an attack upon him and upon his Act, set forth in six resolutions. The first two of these resolutions complained of the failure of the Act to secure the general election of school boards and compulsory attendance. As a matter of fact, Mr. Forster was in favour of both these measures, though he had that keen sense of what was and what was not practicable in which his Birmingham assailants were so signally deficient. The other resolution attacked the 25th clause, and the employment of public money, as was alleged, for the teaching of denominationalism. The real point at issue, so far as these latter objections were concerned, was whether a poor parent, who was unable to pay his child's school fees, was to be at liberty to choose between a denominational and secular school, or was to be compelled to send the child to a school of the latter description. Forster stood as resolutely in defence of the right of the poor parent to make his choice among available schools, as he had

done in defence of the inclusion of the Bible in the schools. He stated, however, that next year (1873) he hoped to be able to bring in a Compulsory Act, as by that time a sufficient amount of school-accommodation would have been provided to prevent such an Act becoming a mere dead letter. The attack of the League party was beaten off by a large majority; but their sullen resentment against the bill and its author was maintained.

The reader is probably by this time not a little wearied by the story of the long controversy; yet Mr. Forster's part in securing the education of the English people cannot be understood if that controversy is not followed to its end. It must be remembered that, as he himself said in a letter quoted on a previous page, a "set" was made against him personally. The members of the League were incessantly striving to detach his colleagues, and above all Mr. Gladstone, from him. Few men have had to fight under greater disadvantages than those with which he had to contend during the last two years of the life of the Ministry of 1868; nor was his position made more tolerable by the fact that he was compelled at times as a minister to defend and accept the responsibility for decisions which were not his own, but those of his colleagues in the Cabinet—some of the very men whom the Leaguers held up to public approval for their fidelity to principles which Forster was supposed to have betrayed.

He had expressed a hope that compulsion might be introduced in 1873, and he was determined that, if it rested with himself, this hope should be realized. On October 8th, 1872, he addressed the following letter to Mr. Gladstone :—

"Education Department, Whitehall.

"My dear Mr. Gladstone,

"I find myself so unwell I must go home to-day, and I do not expect to be able to come up to Cabinets early next week. I do not suppose you will fix before November the bills of secondary importance; but I ought to say that when the time comes for considering them, I shall have to say that I do not think we shall have to do without an amending Education Act dealing with the compulsory question and the 25th clause.

"Yours very truly,

"W. E. Forster."

The Cabinet consented to his preparing such a bill as he suggested, and he forthwith set to work to draft it. Its varying fortunes are set forth in the following extracts from his correspondence :—

To his Wife.

"Education Department, Whitehall,
"January 18th, 1873.

"It is now 5.30, and, with the exception of what time I passed in a cab, I have been hard

at work since 9.45, so my head somewhat runs round. On the whole, however, I have made way, I think. I very much improved and shortened the draft bill with Jenkyns to-day, and I really think we sketched good compulsory clauses, both rural and other. (*January 23rd*, 1873, Privy Council Office) I think it probable that the Cabinet will decide my fate to-morrow, as Gladstone, after having read my memorandum, wishes to have the matter settled at once. (*January 24th*, 1873, Privy Council Office) I must, though under great pressure, write thee a word or two before the Cabinet meets, but I will keep my note open to say what is my fate. Ripon and I go into the discussion entirely agreeing and perfectly willing to support one another, which is a comfort. After all, I should not be surprised if I do not come on until Monday. (6 p.m.) I just began to open my case, when it turned out that the Cabinet had dwindled, so Gladstone said I had better put it off till Monday. . . . I have arranged with Gladstone to call on him at 11.30, and with Kimberley and Halifax to come to me at 2.30 to-morrow about the agricultural clauses. It is quite as well I am put off. (*Sunday*, Athenæum Club) I take advantage of the Foreign Office post to send thee a line. . . . I have good hopes I shall get through the Cabinet to-morrow; and, indeed, I am getting more hopeful about the session, though I

shall have to receive and give some hard knocks. I hope to-morrow to write definitely about plans. I go to Osborne early on Monday, and return, I suppose, for Cabinet on Wednesday. (*January 27th*, 1873, 5.45 p.m.) The discussion just over; the hardest job I ever had. Many times I thought I was beat, but the upshot is, I have carried the bill as proposed, except that part of the 17th clause stands, which orders fees to be paid, and only the remission part is repealed; and after age of labour has begun, I am to be as lenient as possible in my compulsory provisions, especially in rural districts. It has been a desperate fight. Ripon backed me nobly; so did Bruce, Kimberley, and Halifax. (*January 29th*, 1873, 10, Downing Street, Whitehall) I got here about 3.30, an hour after the Cabinet. My visit to Osborne was very interesting, but I fear it must keep till we meet. I saw much of the Queen, who was in good spirits and most pleasant. She wanted to see me again this morning, so I had the yacht to bring me across. It was a cold business, but I have got warm now."

It will be gathered from the foregoing that the Cabinet was by no means united on the subject of compulsory education, and that a hard fight was needed to enable Mr. Forster to carry that proposal which, in the opinion of the League, he ought to have carried three years earlier. But the

troubles of the measure were by no means over when Forster won his victory in the Cabinet. Parliament, which had now existed for more than four years, was becoming demoralized. It had carried many great measures, though none greater than the Education Act. Now it seemed to have lost its energy, and ministers had undoubtedly lost their command over the once-docile majority in the House of Commons. On March 11th, the Irish University Bill of the Government was defeated by a majority of three. It was the first serious defeat which ministers had so far sustained. In his diary, Forster says, "Gladstone rose with the House dead against him and his bill, and made a wonderful speech, easy, almost playful, with passages of great power and eloquence, but with a graceful play which enabled him to plant deep his daggers of satire in Horsman, Fitzmaurice, and Co. Then came the division, very doubtful, but we were beaten by three."

Ministers at once resigned; and two days afterwards, March 13th, a final Cabinet was held, at which an interesting scene occurred.

Diary.

"*March 13th.*—Cabinet again at 12. Decided to resign; on the whole I think Gladstone now for resignation. Outside opinion, and such opinions as Monsell's and Baxter's, very strongly for resignation. Gladstone made us quite a touching little

speech; he began playfully—this was the last of some 150 Cabinets or so, and he wished to say to his colleagues with what 'profound gratitude'—and then he completely broke down and could say nothing, except that he could not enter on the details. He thanked each and all of us for consideration, etc., without any exception, and he might add, without any distinction; and then said how we had debated every question as though we were outside. Tears came to my eyes, and we were all touched. . . . At the House Gladstone made his short statement. Crawford asked about Emanuel. I shortly explained what would be done, and, after a few chaffing words from Osborne, we adjourned till Monday, and I went home a resigned minister. I forgot to say that Gladstone saw the Queen between Cabinet and House, and tendered our resignation, which her Majesty accepted."

The resignation did not, however, take effect. Mr. Disraeli was unable to form an administration, and Mr. Gladstone resumed office. Naturally, what had happened had shaken them greatly, and Forster's Education Bill had to suffer from the shock. The Nonconformists of the League now had a spokesman in the Ministry, in the person of Mr. Winterbotham, a young member who had distinguished himself, both by the ability and the bitterness of his attacks upon the bill when it had first been introduced, and who

now occupied a subordinate place in the Government. He was pressing upon Mr. Gladstone the view that, although the League were so strongly in favour of the principle of compulsion, they wished that no compulsion should be applied where parents were unable to pay for the schooling of their children, or where they had conscientious objections to the schools open to them. This was by way of defeating the proposal contained in Forster's bill for putting an end to the miserable battle over the 25th clause. This proposal was that boards of guardians should pay the school fees from the rates where parents were unable to pay, giving liberty to the parent to choose the school to which his child was to be sent. Beset on the one side by the out-and-out opponents of compulsion, and on the other by the League, which had thus made compulsion a secondary matter, compared with that of the denominational schools, it is not surprising that Mr. Gladstone should have felt anxious to avoid the question altogether. The struggle which now took place within the Cabinet, though short, was very sharp.

To LORD RIPON.

"Education Department, Whitehall,
"April 2nd, 1873.

"MY DEAR RIPON,

"As you are going to see Mr. Gladstone upon the most perplexed question of the Educa-

tion Bill, I think it may save time if I dictate my last thought on the matter. In what I say, I must be considered to reserve the freedom to do my best to convince both Mr. Gladstone and the Cabinet that it would be unwise not to adhere to the decision which had been made to bring in the bill with compulsion. Time, however, so presses that I must be prepared for the possibility of the Cabinet giving up its previous decision.

"My first feeling was to beg to be released from my position, rather than bring in a bill which I felt to be a mistake. But as things stand just now, with the enemy at the gates, I suppose no officer ought to desert his post, even if ordered to dig a grave for his own reputation, and to bury in it what seems to him the best plan of defence. There remains, however, the question of the probability of carrying the second reading of a bill without compulsion; and I have thought this so doubtful, that I have been looking to see how we could do without any bill at all.

"But there are many reasons against this.

"1. The agitation against the 25th clause demands a settlement. We have no right to allow town councils and school boards to be fighting longer than we can help.

"2. It is due to our friends, such as Dent, Baines, Andrew Johnston, etc., to protect them by some settlement against the violent Nonconformists.

"3. We are so pledged by the Queen's speech, and by our action up to the crisis, that it will be a most damaging confession of weakness to say now that we will not bring in a bill, when there is no change but the crisis.

"4. There are several amendments of the Act of real administrative importance which ought at once to be made.

"I have, therefore, been again racking my brain to consider how I could hope to get the second reading of a bill without compulsion, and yet dealing with the 25th clause.

"I am sure no amendment of that clause would have a chance of success. Both sides would probably unite against an amendment; and, in fact, the only chance seems to me to be, first its abolition, and then the substitution for it of a plan which would have some support from the Opposition. I enclose words which might fulfil this condition.

Without doubt they would be opposed by the League and by Miall and Co. But inasmuch as they merely provide that the guardians should enable the really destitute parent to pay for secular instruction, which he is ordered to provide for his child, I do not think the House would support them in their opposition.

"I had a long talk with Bright this afternoon, who, as I told you, wished to see me on the bill. His plan is Lowe's, viz. to oblige all public

elementary schools to admit without fee the destitute children. He is friendly in tone, but I should have to calculate on a speech from him in favour of this plan, which might be damaging. He told me that Birmingham men, representing both the League and the Nonconformists, had seen him yesterday, and were both very strong for compulsion, and I think the House would not, in that case, refuse me a second reading. But I have so often told you in what manner I think I ought to propose the bill that I will not dwell further on that.

"I must only add, that if I bring in the bill without compulsion, I must be allowed to say that I have fulfilled the promise which I twice made in the House last year—that I would this year ask my colleagues to consent to it.

"Yours ever faithfully,

"W. E. FORSTER.

"P.S.—I ought to add that I think we are too deeply pledged to be able to avoid bringing in a Ballot Bill for the school boards in the rural parishes."

The enclosure in this letter was the draft of the proposal to enable the boards of guardians to pay the school fees for indigent parents, such payment not to be considered as parochial relief.

On April 5th the Cabinet met, and decided, greatly to Forster's regret, that the compulsory

clauses of the bill should be dropped. He thus lost, as it turned out for ever, the opportunity of completing, in accordance with his original design, the edifice of a national system of education. The reader is now, however, able to decide for himself the extent to which Mr. Forster was personally responsible for the failure to make the Education Act of 1870 a compulsory one. The fight over the Amendment Bill was a severe one, but in the end Mr. Forster carried his point—the Act providing that no relief should be given for the maintenance of any child between five and thirteen unless the said child was receiving an elementary education. Any such relief, it was further provided, was not to be granted or refused on condition of the child attending any public elementary school other than such as might be selected by the parent.

The next, and happily the last, phase of the controversy, with which the reader need be troubled at any length, was one of a somewhat novel character. Mr. Bright had been compelled through illness to retire from the Ministry early in 1870. In the autumn of 1873, having happily recovered from his serious indisposition, he again became a member of the Government, accepting the office of Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. On October 22nd he addressed his constituents at Birmingham, and took occasion not only to repudiate the Education Act—which

had been introduced into the Cabinet whilst he was still a member of it—but to make a strong attack upon those responsible for it. The blow was, it need hardly be said, a severe one for Mr. Forster. It was all the more severe because it came from a man for whom Forster himself had always entertained a profound affection and admiration, and with whom he had long been upon terms of the most confidential intimacy. That Mr. Bright held strong views in favour of the policy of the Birmingham League was notorious, and neither Mr. Forster nor any one else could have complained, however emphatic might have been the expression given to those views, whilst Mr. Bright was in the position of a private member. There was, however, general surprise at his action in making use of the very first occasion on which he spoke as a minister to denounce one of the chief legislative achievements of the Government, and by implication to condemn the Cabinet in general and Mr. Forster in particular. Such an attack upon a colleague was almost if not altogether without precedent, and for a time it occasioned something like consternation among the friends of the Government, though it filled the Tories and the extreme members of the League with delight.

There is no need to enter into a discussion as to the merits of the questions in dispute between Mr. Bright and his colleagues. As a matter of

fact, Mr. Bright's description of the bill as introduced into the Cabinet, of which he expressed approval, was inaccurate; and equally inaccurate was his description of the character of the amendments—to which he objected—that had been made subsequently in the measure. It would be unfair to Mr. Bright himself, however, not to remember that by his own acknowledgment his recollection of the events which preceded his illness was very imperfect. It would have been an easy matter for Mr. Forster to establish this, and to vindicate himself completely from the attack so unexpectedly made upon him. He was urged by not a few of his friends to deal with Mr. Bright as with an open and uncompromising foe. There were others who urged upon him the duty of instant resignation as the most emphatic mode of protest against the attack. To none of these counsels did he listen. He kept his temper and maintained his old respect for his distinguished colleague, leaving it for others to point out, as they speedily did, that Mr. Bright's attack upon him was based upon some strange misconception of his own attitude towards the measure when it was first introduced. The controversy is dead and buried now, and, instead of reopening it and showing—as might easily be done—that the amendments of the bill in its passage through the House of Commons were more favourable to the Nonconformists than to the Church party, it will be

more interesting to show the spirit in which Forster dealt with the action of his colleague, of which he was bound to take some notice, for the sake of the country and the cause of education. With Mr. Bright's criticisms upon the bill as it stood it was unnecessary to deal, however keenly Mr. Forster might feel them; but he could not allow the impression to get abroad that the educational policy of the Government was to undergo some great alteration in consequence of Mr. Bright's admission to the Cabinet. The following correspondence will speak for itself.

To MR. BRIGHT.

"Burley-in-Wharfedale, Leeds,
"October 25th, 1873.

"MY DEAR BRIGHT,

"I must congratulate you on getting through the great exertion of your speech, without I trust, any injury to your health, but I fear I must ask you to let me refer to that part of it which deals with the Education Act.

"You are reported as saying, 'I was not in Parliament when the Education Bill passed. It was not at any time, so far as I remember, submitted to the Cabinet whilst I was in the practice of meeting with my colleagues. I put this explanation, not for the sake of saying that somebody else did it and I did not, but because

it has been said, and in a very important newspaper, that I was one of those who were concerned in that measure, and had given my assent to it. I think the original fault in the whole of that bill was in submitting to Parliament a great measure on a great subject which had not been sufficiently discussed in public. The Education Bill was supposed to be needful because the system that up to 1870 had existed was held to be insufficient and bad; and the fault of the bill in my mind is that it has extended and completed the system which it ought, in point of fact, to have superseded. It was a bill—I speak of it as it passed, and combined with the changes brought about by the minutes of the Privy Council which came into force with it—it was a bill to encourage denominational education, and, when that was impossible, to establish board schools. It ought, in my opinion, to have been a bill to establish board schools, and to offer inducement to those who were connected with denominational schools to bring them under the control of the school board.'

"Now, the impression made on your audience by these remarks, and which accordingly drew from those of them who disliked the educational policy of the Government 'loud cheers' for your opinions about the Act, and loud cries of 'shame' for its provisions, was that you were entirely free from responsibility with regard to the measure, and therefore at full liberty to condemn its

principle, and to say that no measure ought at that time to have been brought forward.

"I must repeat to you what I said when we had some talk in London about your remarks at the Westminster Palace Hotel, that I really cannot think this a fair impression, and if I recall to you the facts, I think you will agree with me.

"What happened, I believe, was this. The ministers responsible for education having been requested to frame a measure for the consideration of their colleagues, I drew up, as Vice-President, a long memorandum, to which Ripon, as Lord President, appended his approval. It is this paper to which you allude in your speech as the 'original memorandum of the bill which I was permitted to see.'

"Excuse my saying that it was sent to you, as to other members of the Cabinet, on or about November 5th, 1869, in order that the Cabinet, and you as one of its members, should decide what course should be adopted.

"This memorandum came before a Cabinet early in November, and Ripon informed me that, after a discussion of I know not what length, but in which you took part, it was decided that a bill should be prepared in accordance therewith, and brought in by myself. A bill was prepared in strict accordance with this memorandum—in fact, merely putting the memorandum into bill language. In the Queen's speech it was stated that an

education bill would be brought in. I gave notice of it on the first day of the session, and brought it in on February 17th.

"I enclose this memorandum, and mark some of the passages, which will, I think, recall to your memory that it contains a clear statement of—is, in fact, founded on—that principle to which you now object, viz. that our object should be 'to *supplement* the present voluntary system;' to enforce 'compulsory school provision, if and when necessary, but *not otherwise;* to give time, after educational destitution is proved, for bad schools to be improved, or for new schools to be erected under the existing voluntary system, before rates are levied.'

"In so far as the Act now differs from the memorandum of the original bill, it is not more, but less denominational, inasmuch as the provision is inserted which enables any district to have a school board if it wishes, whether educationally destitute or not, and that provision is omitted which would have enabled the school boards to aid the denominational schools out of the rates, not by mere payment for indigent parents, but by general subsidy.

"I am well aware that, had it not been for your attack of illness, which we all felt to be such a great calamity, you might have expressed your objections, and obliged a reconsideration of the question between the Cabinet of February 4th, the last before the Queen's speech at which you were

present, and the 17th February, when I brought in the bill on behalf of the Government; but as you had allowed all the previous steps to be taken, do you yourself think you would have done so?

"It is very painful to me to ask these questions, but I must ask one other.

"Were you in my place, having a most difficult but yet important work to do, in doing which I must incur much odium and make many sacrifices, would you not be surprised that one of the men who set me to this work should now head the opposition to its performance?

"Of far more importance, however, than the past is the future, though the past is not without an important bearing on the present.

"It is true, you state in your speech that you do not pledge the Government, but such a speech spoken by any Cabinet minister, and especially by you, with your power and influence in the country, throws so much doubt upon the future educational policy of the Government, and thereby so much increases my difficulties, that I am obliged to press upon Mr. Gladstone the necessity, in my opinion, of this doubt being without delay removed.

"You will, however, I suppose, yourself think it necessary to bring the matter before the next Cabinet.

"Believe me to remain, my dear Bright,

"Yours very truly,

"W. E. FORSTER."

MR. BRIGHT *to* MR. FORSTER.

"Rochdale, October 27th, 1873.

"MY DEAR FORSTER,

"I thank you for your letter of Saturday, and hasten to reply to it. My recollection of what took place in regard to the education question just before I was withdrawn from the Cabinet is this.

"The only document which I can *recollect* to have received and read is the draft bill of the date of January 22nd, 1870, of which I think it is but fair to say that my impression at the time was rather favourable than otherwise. I was at that period—I mean in the fortnight preceding the complete break-down of my health—not able to give attention to it, being harassed with the Irish Land Bill, and especially with the clauses I had proposed to facilitate the purchase of farms by the tenantry, and by the feebleness which I felt to be increasing upon me.

"What I recollect of the Cabinet discussion is only this, that it was a question whether the Education Bill should be announced or not. I was not in favour of proceeding with it, the Irish Land Bill being in hand; but Lord De Grey took a different view, and referred to your strong wish to proceed.

"I do not think any definite result was arrived at on that occasion, but later a result in accordance with your view was come to, as was assumed,

and the intended measure was announced. I think it likely that I gave less attention to the whole question than it deserved, but I was burdened with much work and much weakness.

"But if the bill had passed as it appeared in the original draft, or rather, if no change had been made in the annual grant, and none in the mode of election, I should not have condemned it. I know something of the difficulties of the question, and I can make allowances for any one having to deal with it, and I think the Nonconformists would also have regarded the measure with forbearance, and probably with approval.

"The increase of the annual grant not only made the Church party the more cling to their schools, but induced them to make efforts far greater than before to give notice of new schools, that they might secure, first the building grant, and then the increased annual grant, with which they can maintain many of their schools without any voluntary contributions, and the rest of them with small and unimportant voluntary aid.

"This great concession, unexpected and, as I think, wholly evil, has had the effect of fastening on the country the old system, and it has thrown into school board elections an element most unfavourable to an honest and successful working of an educational measure.

"The old question of supremacy is raised, and the money payments of the State are struggled for

by priest and parson and their partisans, to the exclusion of the real interests of public education.

"Then we have the cumulative vote with its aggravation of another evil. The school board is comprised of delegates of church and chapels; and the miserable squabbles of these delegates, suspecting and thwarting each other, fill up many of the reports of the school board discussions.

"But I need not go further into this. My opinion on the scheme as a whole has been long known, and before my constituents I felt bound to explain it. There are two points to which I have referred—the one bearing on the question whether we are on the right tack or not, must be left for experience and the partial failure which I cannot but anticipate. The other has immediate reference to the state of feeling among the Nonconformists, caused in some degree by the operation of the 25th clause, and, I think, justly. They complain, too, that in many cases the annual grant is so large that schools are maintained without voluntary contributions, and that annual grants are given to new schools hereafter to be built, thus continuing and encouraging the undesirable extension of a system which must in the main be a Church system.

"What I have condemned in the policy of 1870 is the increased annual grant, which has entirely changed the spirit and nature of the bill, and the mode of election, which gives to sects a

power which was intended to be given to the public.

"With regard to the main question, the Government can do nothing now, but I think they can, and ought, to propose some change in the minor points, which will show some consideration for the feelings of Nonconformists. If they refuse to do this, I see no hope of a remedy to the disorganization which their educational policy has introduced into the Liberal party in every constituency in England and Wales.

"I hope I need not tell you how much I am grieved to differ from you in this matter. If it could have slept, I should not have disturbed it. But it is the cause of incessant and, I fear, increasing discord in the constituencies, and I cannot allow my position in regard to it to be misunderstood by those with whom I have acted all my political life. I wish to be faithful to new friends, but not at the expense of old ones, or of my own convictions.

"I think, after reading your letter, I must be in some degree mistaken as to what took place in 1869; but what I have said at Birmingham and now was, and is, precisely what I remember. But as to the changes and concessions made during the session, which alone I seriously condemn, I knew nothing of them for many months after they were settled, and of course cannot accept any responsibility in connection with them.

"If you think well of it, you may send this letter to Mr. Gladstone. I should rather like him to see it.

"Believe me, always,

"Very sincerely yours,

"JOHN BRIGHT.

"Right Hon. W. E. Forster, M.P.

"Burley-in-Wharfedale, near Leeds."

To MR. GLADSTONE.

"Burley-in-Wharfedale, Leeds,

"October 25th, 1873.

"MY DEAR MR. GLADSTONE,

"You will not be surprised at my finding educational difficulties much increased by Bright's speech. I think I ought to send you a copy of a letter which I felt I could not help writing, more especially about the past; but as regards the immediate future, the position is this:

"We are just now in the very crisis of the working of the Act, having to force school boards on the recalcitrant districts.

"This would be a hard enough task under any circumstances, but with the League trusting, and the voluntaries fearing, by reason of this speech, that the educational policy of the Government will be changed, the department will be almost powerless, and my position will be hardly tenable.

"I merely mention this as one of the difficulties

in which this speech is considered by both sides to have plunged the question.

"I suppose Bright will bring the matter before the next Cabinet, but if not, I think I must ask you to do so, or to let me bring it forward, as, if the policy of the Government is not changed, I hardly can avoid taking an early opportunity of saying so.

"Just consider what would be Cardwell's difficulties in working his purchase scheme if a powerful colleague declared its policy utterly wrong, and said he only watched for an opportunity of changing it.

"I am, dear Mr. Gladstone,

"Yours very truly,

"W. E. FORSTER."

To MR. BRIGHT.

"Burley-in-Wharfedale, Leeds,

"October 28th, 1873.

"MY DEAR BRIGHT,

"I am obliged to you for your letter of yesterday, and observe what you say with regard to some change in the minor points of the Act, and I hardly need say that I shall consider any proposal you may make for that purpose with the utmost desire to agree with you if I rightly can.

"Meantime, just one word with regard to the difference between the first draft of the bill and Act as it passed. I think you will find the

changes are against, not for, the denominational system.

"1. The year of grace (for denominational schools) was struck out.

"2. Building grants were stopped after the end of the year.

"3. The power to assist the voluntary schools out of the rates, greatly objected to by the Nonconformists, was omitted.

"4. The conscience clause was made much stronger by being turned into a time-table conscience clause.

"5. Catechisms were struck out of board schools.

"Against this was the fact that by the code the annual grant was increased, but this was not so great a money gain as the omission of 3 (viz. the power of a denominational board to take rate money for denominational schools) was a money loss; and it must be remembered, (1) That other alterations in the appropriation of the grants, viz. the stoppage of the building grants after a few months, told against the voluntary schools; and (2) that the annual grant to their rivals the board schools was at the same time and to the same extent increased.

"These changes, taken as a whole, were made by Mr. Gladstone as concessions to the Nonconformist opposition, and I am confident that the first draft of the bill more completely carried out

the principle to which you object in your speech—was, in fact, more in favour of the denominational system—than the Act as it passed, and would have been so considered by the Dissenters, and I think the discussions in the House during the passing of the bill confirms this view.

"There remains the cumulative vote. That was not the proposal of the Government, but the almost unanimous desire of the House, supported by many men who in other matters support the League; and whatever the objections to it, we must not forget that in very many important boards without it League views would almost certainly be unrepresented.

"I send your letter by to-day's post to Mr. Gladstone, and can only add how glad I should be if we could see together in this matter.

"Yours ever truly,

"W. E. FORSTER."

To his Wife.

"80, Eccleston Square,
"November 10th, 1873.

"I write a few lines before starting for the office, as when I get there I shall be much pressed. . . . I have only time to say that my conversation with Gladstone has not been unsatisfactory. He thinks Bright means no proposal at present; nothing in the Queen's speech—nothing till the

session was well on and he could see his way. I said his friends expected more, but that was Bright's look-out. He agreed with me. I said I did not wish to bring anything before the Cabinet, as I wished no change. All I wished, as regards Bright's proposals, was that, if they were to be made, they should be made at once; but I added that Bright had made matters so difficult that I must, if I had to speak—and I thought I ought to speak—answer Bright, without of course naming him, but by defending the Act and the policy of the Government; and if I remained in the Cabinet after this, it was a proof that Bright would not change our policy. I said I ought to warn him (G.) of this. He told me I ought to tell Bright I should do this, and we agreed that I should not bring the matter before the Cabinet to-day, but that G. should tell him I would call on him. I write all this in great hurry and distraction. Farewell."

It was at Liverpool that Forster made the speech in which he vindicated his Act, and made it clear that there was no intention of abandoning the line of policy upon which it was based. In all that he had to say of Mr. Bright in this speech he was most friendly, as he had been in his private communications with him on the subject. At the first Cabinet at which they met, after he had thus replied to Mr. Bright, the latter handed him a

note containing these words: "I think your speech very good and fair, and likely to do good, though there are some points in it, as you well know, that I wish you could view somewhat more as I view them.—J. B."

There were those who expressed surprise, and even regret, that Mr. Forster did not take a more antagonistic position, in reference to this action by Mr. Bright. In reply to some strictures of this nature, Forster wrote, saying that he could not think of Mr. Bright otherwise than as an old and honoured friend. "I have been long on terms of friendship with him, both private and political, and the fact that I do not consider that in his speech he behaved well to me does not make that friendship cease. I was proud of his friendship in past years, and with all his faults and infirmities there are few men I honour more. Even in this matter I cannot forget that his conduct arises very much out of the difficulties resulting from his own self-sacrifice in joining Gladstone. Then I was addressing (at Liverpool) an audience much more against Bright than for him. I knew the Tories were trying to make it appear as though we had quarrelled; the papers had said we did not speak, and I felt it due to the Government and the party, and especially to Gladstone, to disprove this, and all the more due as I was really obtaining the absolute victory in the dispute."

The controversy with Mr. Bright was the

culmination of Forster's difficulties and anxieties whilst he was education minister. The reader now has some slight knowledge of the obstacles he had to encounter, and the grave and painful circumstances in which he constantly found himself placed, whilst he was striving to the best of his ability to secure fair play for the Act of 1870. Unpopularity with the Radicals, with whom he had been so long in friendly concert, and a place of anxiety, it might even be said of suspicion, among his own colleagues in the Cabinet, were his immediate rewards for the part he had played in founding our national system of education. But the end of his oppressive official labours and worries at the Council Office was now very near. It came with the dissolution of February, 1874, and the resignation of Mr. Gladstone. Writing to his sister-in-law, Miss Arnold, in acknowledgment of a letter on the occasion of his quitting his work in the Education Department, he said, "You and all my friends, I fear, overvalue it—at any rate, overvalue me in it; but still I do believe some education is now secured to all English children. Whether that *some* is to be enough to be of real value is now the question; but I do not think the work can stop, and I believe Lord Sandon will do his best to carry it on."

END OF VOL. I.

PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED, LONDON AND BECCLES.

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018